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# **Vagrant Hummingbirds in New York State**

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## **Introduction**

The astonishing increase in recent years in the numbers of western hummingbirds recorded in eastern North America defies explanation and challenges efforts at record keeping. Whereas Conway and Drennan (1979) were able to list all prior records of Rufous Hummingbirds (*Selasphorus rufus*) in the East, it has by now become impossible to enumerate even those of a single season. New York State's experience has, on a smaller scale, mirrored that of the rest of the East over this period. From Carleton's (1981) first NYS report of a Rufous Hummingbird in 1980, through an accretion of fully substantiated records of this species in the state, to the presence of three species of hummingbirds along a short stretch of the lower Hudson River last fall—NY has shared eastern North America's expanding fortunes in the occurrence of vagrant hummingbirds.

In the present paper, we provide details concerning two Calliope Hummingbirds (*Stellula calliope*), one Rufous Hummingbird, and one *Archilochus* sp. present in Manhattan and Yonkers during the late fall/early winter of 2001-02, summarize what is known through 2001 about the occurrence of vagrant hummingbirds in NY and illustrate the current status of western hummingbirds throughout the East by compiling published records from the fall of 2000. For NY records, we use the term *vagrants* not only for all hummingbirds other than the familiar Ruby-throated (*A. colubris*), but also for birds identified as Ruby-throated outside of that species' expected dates of occurrence (approximately 15 Apr-15 Oct).

## **Hummingbirds on the Hudson, Nov 2001-Jan 2002**

As will be seen below, the lower Hudson River Valley had already distinguished itself as a focus of hummingbird vagrancy before the fall of 2001. At least four different *Selasphorus* hummingbirds (including NY's first fully documented Rufous) were present during the fall of 1993 at three sites in Orange County, The Bronx, and Manhattan—and another Rufous was present in Dec 1996 across the state line in Bergen County, NJ (Walsh et al. 1999). Thus, a precedent existed for the events of Nov 2001, when NY birders flocked to an eight mile stretch of the Hudson to study four hummingbirds of three species: NY's first Calliope Hummingbirds, what was surely one of NY's most obliging Rufous



Rufous Hummingbird 23 Nov 2001  
 Lenoir Nature Preserve  
 Yonkers, Westchester Co.  
 Kevin McGowan

Hummingbirds ever, and a less obliging *Archilochus* that some thought just might have been NY's first Black-chinned Hummingbird (*A. alexandri*).

On 17 Nov 2001, Tomi Ito-Goldman, a volunteer for the butterfly garden at Lenoir Nature Preserve in Yonkers, Westchester County, informed MB that a hummingbird was present at the Preserve. Given the date, MB's curiosity was piqued and within ten minutes of his arrival, the bird made a brief appearance. The presence of rufous on its sides and in the tail convinced MB that he had a *Selasphorus* hummingbird, and he made a few calls to alert others. Rich Guthrie made it to Lenoir and saw the bird as light was fading. Two days later, MB obtained excellent views of the shape, width, and color pattern of its tail feathers and confirmed its identity as a Rufous—as opposed to the

exceedingly similar Allen's (*S. sasin*) and the very similar Broad-tailed (*S. platycercus*). A week later, he was able to document the diagnostic features photographically, and a parade of birders had begun filing through the Preserve.

The 'small gorgeted hummingbirds' (i.e., hummingbirds of the genera *Archilochus*, *Calypte*, *Stellula*, and *Selasphorus*) are notoriously difficult to identify. Females and immatures in particular pose enormous obstacles to confident identification because many of the critical features require in-hand examination or exceptionally close and prolonged views for accurate assessment (Pyle 1997). Howell's (2002) superb photographic guide—the first work available to North American birders that synthesizes state of the art identification criteria for this group and presents them from the point of view of a field observer, rather than a bander—was still on the horizon during the late fall of 2001 when the events related here unfolded.

Around the time that the Yonkers Rufous was discovered, news of two hummingbirds at Fort Tryon Park in northern Manhattan, New York County, came to the attention of the birding community. Both were female/immature types, and both were initially identified as likely Ruby-throated because they lacked the conspicuous and extensive rufous coloration characteristic of even immature *Selasphorus*. As far as we are aware, Tom Burke was the first observer to raise a third possibility—the one that ultimately proved correct—when he suggested on 1 Dec that neither was an *Archilochus* and that at least one might have been a Calliope. On 2 Dec, MB patiently studied first one, and then, after hours of waiting, the other of the Fort Tryon birds. His conclusion, based on the presence



of an elongated, violet gorget feather on the first bird and on several structural features shared by both, was that both were likely Calliopes. This conclusion was amply confirmed by many subsequent observers, including some, like Paul Lehman, with cutting-edge expertise gained through experience in western North America and through study of previous extralimital Calliopes in Cape May, New Jersey.

Both the Calliopes and the Lenoir Rufous remained accessible over the next several days, and the intense scrutiny they received led to another discovery. On 7 Dec, Hugh Martin found a second hummingbird at Lenoir Preserve. This bird lacked the rufous in the tail characteristic of *Selasphorus*, and it lacked the structural attributes (now well-known in NY!) of Calliope. Indeed, it appeared to be either a Ruby-throated or the exceedingly similar Black-chinned. The unidentified *Archilochus* was seen by a number of observers on 7 and 8 Dec. Among these, Andy Guthrie obtained several photographs and posted a detailed description of this bird and its discovery at <[http://home.earthlink.net/~andyguthrie/ny\\_archilochus.htm](http://home.earthlink.net/~andyguthrie/ny_archilochus.htm)>. Circumstances made it difficult to view critical features (such as the precise shape of the outer primaries) distinguishing female/immature Ruby-throated from Black-chinned Hummingbirds. Thus the bird remained '*Archilochus* sp.' throughout its stay.

The Rufous Hummingbird at Lenoir was seen daily from 17 Nov to 27 Dec, and it was last noted on 5-6 Jan 2002 (MB). Both the Rufous and the *Archilochus* sp. were recorded on the Bronx-Westchester CBC on 23 Dec (the last date known for the latter bird). The Calliopes at Fort Tryon were recorded on the Lower Hudson CBC 16 Dec and were last reported 27 Dec (NYC RBA, eBirds NYC). As of May 2002, photographs and accounts of these birds were available on the Hudson River Audubon web site: <<http://www.hras.org/sela.html>> and links therein.

## **Records of vagrant hummingbirds in NYS**

### **Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*)**

Early Nov-10 Dec 1988, Jamestown, Chautauqua (R. Sundell, KB 39:107)  
Visiting feeder; netted and taken into captivity; died 11 Dec; disposition ?

26 Nov-13 Dec 1961, Riis Park, Queens (D'Anna 1998)

24 Nov 98 Riis Park, Queens (R. Veit, SSM, mob; KB 49: 94)

Identified by shape of outer primaries and other characters

### ***Archilochus* species**

7-23 Dec 2001 Lenoir Nature Preserve, Yonkers, Westchester  
(A. Guthrie, in litt.; this paper)

### **Anna's Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*)**

18 Nov-11 Dec 1998, Binghamton, Broome (Grosek 1998, NYSARC 2001)  
Adult male visiting feeder; taken into captivity; reportedly released in spring  
(A. Heidebach, fide E. Levine,).

### **Calliope Hummingbird (*Stellula calliope*)**

Two, mid Nov-27 Dec 2001, Fort Tryon Park, New York (this paper)  
Immature males feeding on floral nectar

### **Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)**

9 Aug 1993, Chester, Orange (J. Tramantano, KB 43:346, NYSARC 1995)  
Adult male

Oct-3 Dec 1994, Cambridge, Washington (NYSARC 1996)  
Adult male visiting feeder; taken into captivity 3 Dec; died 9 Dec; disposition?

4-6 Oct 1996, Colden, Erie (NYSARC 1999)  
Photographed

22-28 Nov 2000 Water Mill, Suffolk (H. McGuinness, mob; KB 51: 565)  
Adult female; taken into captivity 28 Nov; died 5 Dec; specimen to AMNH  
(#833853), where re-examined by SSM 25 Apr 2002

18-28 Oct 2001, Panama, Chautauqua. (R. Miga, J. Berry, R. Sundell;  
KB 52: 54) Photograph and report to NYSARC

17 Nov 2001-6 Jan 2002. Lenoir Nat. Pres., Yonkers, Westchester Co.  
(this paper) Immature male

### ***Selasphorus* species**

To our knowledge, no objective reasons exist suggesting that any of the records in this section pertain to Broad-tailed Hummingbird. Although we follow original sources in designating these records '*Selasphorus sp.*', we recommend that, in the future, observers and editors use the term 'Rufous/Allen's' for this category of records.

3-13 Sep 1980, Elizabethtown, Essex (Carleton 1981, NYSARC 1981)

21 Jul 1988, Ulysses, Tompkins (S. Sibley, NYSARC 1990)  
Visiting feeder

Sep-Oct 1993, Saugerties, Ulster (NYSARC 1996)  
 16 Nov 1993, Wave Hill, Bronx (B. Loeb, KB 44:79)  
 Two, 18-24 Nov 1993, Manhattan  
 (T. Burke, H. McGuinness, mob; KB 44:79)  
 22 Nov-1 Dec 1993, Floral Park, Queens  
 (A. Lauro, KB 44:79, NYSARC 1996)  
 3 Sep 2000, Port Byron, Cayuga  
 (D. Trumble, Paxton et al. 2001)  
 25-28 Nov 2000, East Hampton, Suffolk  
 (J. Ross, H. McGuinness, KB 51: 565)  
 Several others implied by Rising (1998)



### Hummingbird species

18 Nov 1998, Binghamton (Grosek 1998)  
 Nov 2000, Orient (fide H. McGuinness)

Calliope Hummingbird 2 Dec 2001  
 Fort Tryon Park, Manhattan  
 New York Co.  
 Mike Bochnick

## Vagrant hummingbirds in eastern NA, Aug 2000-Feb 2001

The Regional Reports in the first two issues of Volume 55 of *North American Birds* document the presence of no fewer than eleven species of hummingbirds east of Texas during the period Aug 2000-Feb 2001. As noted above, NY recorded one Rufous, two *Selasphorus* sp., and one hummingbird sp. during this period. Records outside of NY were as follows:

Late Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were noted in TN (two 24 Oct), IA (11 Nov), MD (two), the Southern Atlantic Coast Region ('a smattering'), Florida (13 in five counties, Dec-Feb), and presumably elsewhere along the Gulf Coast. Black-chinned was specifically identified in NC (four), SC (one), coastal GA (three), Appalachian GA (one), FL (two-three), and presumably elsewhere along the Gulf Coast. Thus, the scattered reports of late *Archilochus* sp. north to VA and DC cannot be assigned to either species on the basis of default probability.

Calliope Hummingbirds were recorded at Cape May, NJ (the state's second); Suffolk, VA (the state's and the Region's first); GA (five banded statewide were the state's third through seventh); TN (the state's second and third); western NC (probable); FL (the state's twelfth and thirteenth); AL (the state's ninth through twelfth); MS; and LA.

Rufous Hummingbirds were identified in MA (one), CT (three), eastern PA (one), DE (one), MD (two), VA (one), NC ('several'), SC ('several'), GA ('too many to mention'), FL (four), TN (five), MI (two), and WI (one). In the Middlewestern Prairie Region, this species was recorded ten times and was



described as 'becoming quite regular' (Brock 2001), and so many were found in the Central Southern region that only records from unusual inland localities were mentioned by Jackson (2001) and Cooley (2001). In addition, many birds were reported as simply '*Selasphorus* sp.': MA (one), CT (one), eastern PA (four), NJ (one), MD (three), VA (one), FL (11+), western PA (one), TN (one), western NC (one), and WI (three).

Despite the numerical predominance of Rufous Hummingbirds among vagrant *Selasphorus*, both Allen's and Broad-tailed were well documented in eastern NA during the fall of 2000. The Allen's Hummingbird present at Cape May, NJ 11-15 Nov was the first for NJ and the second for the Hudson-Delaware Region. AL also recorded its 15<sup>th</sup> Allen's during this season. Records of Broad-tailed Hummingbirds included GA's third, FL's second and third, AL's fifth, and one in MS.

Rounding out the species that occur in the east fairly regularly, Buff-bellied Hummingbird was recorded in LA, AL, western FL, and Cedar Key, FL during the fall of 2000. The rarest of the rare during the fall of 2000 were a Green Violet-ear in AR, GA's third Anna's, WI's first Broad-billed (with another in LA), and the USA's first Green-breasted Mango outside of Texas (Concord, NC 12 Nov-4 Dec).

## Conclusions

If the incursion of western hummingbirds to the East during the fall of 2000 was unprecedented (warranting superlatives like 'amazing' and 'astounding' throughout the Regional Reports), it nevertheless failed to auger the even greater flight of 2001, the full scope of which is still emerging. A comparison of CBC results for the two years reveals that Dec 2001-Jan 2002 produced 223 Rufous and 91 Rufous/Allen's in 11 states east of TX (including NY, NJ, and DE), whereas the previous season (the one described in detail above) produced 179 Rufous and 56 Rufous/Allen's (BirdSource). Although it is impossible to predict how far into the future this dizzying upward trend will extend, it seems clear that southern and western hummingbird species will continue to appear in eastern North America, including NY, and that new state records will continue to accrue.

Coincident with this distributional revolution, an ethical debate has emerged. A perception exists that maintenance of feeders late into the fall encourages hummingbirds to linger later into the season than they otherwise would—and later than they 'should' for their own well-being. Fazio (1995) discusses several aspects of this perception. Also, some wildlife rehabilitators have supported intervening on behalf of late-lingering hummingbirds by taking them into captivity for relocation to warmer regions or release during the spring (Frink 1998).

A serious obstacle to the former perception is the ongoing extraordinary rarity of late-season Ruby-throated Hummingbirds in the Northeast. As an abundant breeding species in this region, this species ought to be, by orders of magnitude, the most likely to be deflected from its normal migratory movements if feeders actually had this sort of nefarious influence. The fact that the Ruby-throated

remains much rarer than the Rufous in particular (and other western species in aggregate) in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions in late fall suggests that feeders are not directly responsible for the trends described above. Likewise, the frequency with which hummingbirds taken into captivity for rehabilitation, transfer, or release in spring, actually die while under care does not provide a great deal of support for this approach. Even worse, it is not clear that specimens thus procured often make their way to scientific collections, where they could, in theory, help greatly to document changes in distribution.

Interestingly, hummingbird researchers such as Bob Sargent have demonstrated that Rufous, Calliope, and other hummingbirds can tolerate surprisingly cold weather in eastern North America; that they almost invariably use, in addition to feeders, such natural resources as floral nectar, sapsucker wells, and insects; and that they frequently are able to respond successfully when circumstances of weather or food availability change over the course of the winter. In an email exchange posted by Ben Cacace to the news group 'eBirds NYC,' Sargent provided examples where banded Rufous and Calliope Hummingbirds returned year after year to wintering sites in the Southeast that were at least as cold as coastal NY (lowest temperatures -10 to 10 degrees F), and other examples where banded birds that 'disappeared' during periods of poor weather or food availability were proven to reappear at their original sites when conditions ameliorated—or at new sites hundreds of miles away.

We do not pretend here to be able to resolve all of the ethical issues outlined above, but it seems clear in view of current knowledge that the occurrence of hummingbirds in eastern North America during late fall and winter is not necessarily an 'unnatural' phenomenon, even when the birds use feeders as one source of food. Nor does the presence of hummingbirds during sub-freezing weather automatically require relocating the birds or taking them into captivity. After all, Calliopes breeding in Montana routinely lay their eggs and begin incubating while snow remains on the ground and nighttime temperatures drop below freezing (R. Sargent, in litt.). Whatever one's views on these matters, vagrant hummingbirds will undoubtedly continue to challenge both our identification skills and our sentiments. We encourage observers in NY and elsewhere to embrace these challenges as we strive to understand the present and future distributional trends of these enigmatic birds.

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## **Slaty-backed Gull in Sullivan County, February 2002**

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The closing of municipal landfills in recent years has resulted in a paucity of wintering gulls in many places where they had earlier been common, but the importation of trash into an expanding landfill in Monticello, Sullivan County, has brought a greater variety and increasing numbers of gulls to this rural county about 100 miles north of New York City.

An adult Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*) was found in two locations on three dates in February 2002 in Sullivan County. This native of north-eastern Eurasia and northern Japan is considered rare along the Bering coast of Alaska, and there have been a few scattered records in the lower 48 states since the first one was found in St. Louis, Mo., along the Mississippi River in late 1983 (Goetz et al.1986). There is one previous New York State record, that of a bird in the Niagara Falls region, 24 Nov through 29 Dec 1992 (accepted by NYSARC 1994) and subsequently reported in *Kingbird* (Brock 1994, 82-86).

The gull was found at Monticello, NY by VMF on 4 Feb, relocated at the same location by JHH on 8 Feb, and then relocated again on 20 Feb at Neversink Reservoir by VMF, JHH, and PAB, as well as Renee Davis and Marge Gorton. Each sighting is here described.

**4 Feb, VMF:** The gull was observed for about 30 minutes near noon on Monday 4 Feb as it sat or stood on the ice at Kiamesha Lake in the village of Monticello. As I scanned the flock of 150 or so gulls, my eye was caught by a gull with a dark mantle. The light was excellent, and the gull was on the near side of the flock. They were all loafing on the ice or in the small amount of open water, perhaps 200 yards from my viewing position on the shore behind a local water bottling plant. The dark mantle color was intermediate between the gray of the Herring Gulls and the black of a few adult Great Black-backed Gulls, both nearby. My first thought was Lesser Black-backed, but I quickly dismissed that because my bird was too large, the size of nearby Herring Gulls... and then it stood up. I was interested before, but on seeing the legs, I became really interested. The legs were red, a kind of brick red, opaque, and in the direct light, very different from the paler and almost translucent pinkish legs of nearby Herring Gulls. The gull was in adult

plumage, the bill light with a red spot, and there were dusky streaks on the head, mostly on the back of it. There was a dark smudge around the eye. The broad white trailing edge of the secondaries contrasted with the dark mantle and black primary tips.

I had been away for a few weeks and this was my first birding since returning, and my car was not properly equipped. I did not have a telephone, my copy of Sibley or Grant, or my camera. I did have my Swarovski spotting scope, and had wonderful views of the bird with it. I had the National Geographic 3rd edition, and I studied the bird through my scope with that book in hand, eliminating species after species. Lesser Black-backed was too small, and leg color was way off. The leg color of the adult Thayer's gull shown was good, but my bird's mantle was much darker. The mantle color of the Western Gull was right, but my bird's legs were redder, and its head was streaked. I did not look at the picture of a winter adult *vegae* Herring Gull until later, but in retrospect the mantle of that bird is not dark enough, or the legs red enough. Because of its range and rarity, I was hesitant to identify the bird as a Slaty-backed Gull, but could find no other species that fit.

While studying this bird my attention was diverted by the arrival of a Black-headed Gull (*L. ridibundus*) which landed close by, only the second record for Sullivan County. I had found the other one on a Christmas Count 10 years ago on the same lake. After watching that gull for about five minutes, I knew I had to get to a phone to summon other birders. Renee Davis and I returned within about an hour, and the Black-headed Gull was still there, but the Slaty-backed Gull was not.

**8 Feb, JHH:** At Kiamesha Lake on 8 Feb I relocated the gull that had first been discovered by VMF on 4 Feb. The viewing conditions were excellent, the temperature was in the mid-forties and it was a bright sunny day, and I was watching from the same location as described above. I located the bird bathing at 12:50 PM and it continued to bathe for about ten minutes. The first thing I noticed was that the mantle was dark, considerably darker than the nearby Herring Gulls, but not quite as dark as the adult Great Black-backed Gull nearby. The gull had extensive dark streaks on the back of head and nape. I called VMF on my cell phone and described the bird in detail. As we spoke it finished bathing and hopped out on the ice, and I was able to see that it had bright deep red legs. It then sat next to an adult Herring Gull, accentuating the difference in mantle color, and showing the bird to be the same size as the Herring Gull. It had a yellow bill with a red gonys spot. The bird continued to preen for about five minutes, then took off by itself. As it gained altitude, it widened its circle, coming closer to me. At the closest point on the second circle, it banked, affording me an excellent look at it



from underneath. I was able to see dark gray under primaries and triangular-shaped lighter wing lining. I noted a broad white trailing edge to the wings and a thinner white leading edge on the wing.

The gull then flew to the southwest, directly toward the Sullivan County Landfill, but I was unable to relocate it there. Now convinced that we had a Slaty-backed Gull, I posted it on the internet, and several people came to search during the next 11 days. None were successful, though several Iceland Gulls and Glaucous Gulls were found..

**20 Feb, VMF, JHH, PAB, et al.:** Intrigued by our descriptions, PAB arranged to meet us on 20 Feb to search for the gull. We checked Kiamesha Lake and resting flocks of gulls at Woodbourne, and then went to a New York City Reservoir, Neversink, where gulls were known to sometimes spend the night. We relocated the Slaty-backed Gull at Neversink Reservoir at about 10:30 AM, and it remained in view until approximately 12:30 PM. We passed by again at about 1 PM and the bird was still sleeping on the ice in the same location.

It was a fairly warm day, with cloudy skies, and occasionally a few light sprinkles, and breezy. We watched the gull at an angle from above, standing in a parking lot along the road which crosses the reservoir dam, from three to five hundred yards from the bird, using binoculars or any of four scopes (Swarovski and Kowa). JHH used a JVC video camera to video the bird through a Kowa 824 with a fluorite lens at 60X, a task made difficult because of the breeze.



Slaty-backed Gull 20 Feb 2002  
Neversink Reservoir  
Sullivan Co.  
John Haas

The flock of about 100 to 150 gulls included numerous Herring Gulls and Ring-billed Gulls and the eighth larid species in the county for the month, a second-winter Lesser Black-backed Gull.

The Slaty-backed Gull exhibited various behaviors throughout the period of observation. After bathing, it hopped up on the ice and began to preen. It walked around, appeared to bite and chew on the snowy portion of the ice for several minutes, and for a period slept with head tucked. After about an hour the bird took off with the other gulls, joining a kettle and circling several times before again landing on the ice. We were able to follow it as it flew and circled several times, and had good views in flight from both above and below.

When it landed in the flock again, it could easily be relocated because of the distinctly dark mantle, which was evenly colored. The size was close to that of a Herring Gull, but we had the impression that it was a heavier gull. Since we were viewing the gull from a high vantage point, we could often see the feet, and the red webs and toes were very striking against the white ice. The bill was yellow, and the culmen straight, with an abrupt droop, and a red gonydeal spot in the angle, that angle being less pronounced than that of a Great Black-backed Gull bill. The head and nape were heavily streaked with dark brownish streaks, darkest on the nape. The dark smudge unevenly encircling the light eye was darker than the head streaking. The breast and underparts were white, as was the tail. The black of the outer primary tips was darker than the dark gray of the back, and the tertial crescent was very broad.

We were able to follow the bird in flight through both binoculars and spotting scopes. The very wide white trailing edge of the wing was conspicuous in flight, and there was also a narrow white leading edge. The primaries of the underwing were dark gray in flight but not as dark as the mantle. We were able to observe the "pearl string," white spots on the innermost of the outer primaries connection to the trailing edge of the primaries and secondaries, most frequently seen on the upswing of its wingbeat, between the gray of the under primaries and the black of the primary tips. At least one mirror was present on the outermost primaries.

Although the distance was not nearly as close as during the sightings at Kiamesha Lake, the Slaty-backed Gull remained at Neversink Reservoir the better part of the day and was watched at leisure by people who know what to look for and were more prepared. PAB, who was familiar with the species from Alaska, had a 50x fluorite eyepiece on his Kowa 823 scope. In addition to the usual gull references, he brought excellent Slaty-backed Gull photographs with him. He phoned other birders from the site, and several others (John Fritz, Shai Mitra, Mary and John Yrizarry) arrived later in the afternoon and concurred in

the identification. Unfortunately, birders arriving the next day were unable to relocate the bird.

The key identification points for Slaty-backed Gull as described in Goetz et al.(1986) and Gustafson and Peterjohn (1994) were present. We considered, and rejected, the possibility of a Herring x Great Black-backed hybrid as described by Andrle (1972) and Foxall (1979). Andrle published a black-and-white photo of two hybrids whose mantles do not appear to be quite as dark as that of the gull we observed. Also, both he and Foxall describe the hybrid's leg color as "whitish tinged flesh," not red as in our gull. Neither mentions a dark smudge around the eye or a broad white trailing edge of the wing, two prominent features the gull herein described.

All other gulls we considered lack the combination of characters which we believe confirms this gull as Slaty-backed: dark slate-gray mantle; broad white trailing edge to the wing; red legs; dark brownish streaking on the head, mostly on the nape; uneven smudge around the eye; under side of primaries dark silver gray; a few white spots between dark grey of primaries and black wingtips. Our first two sightings of the Slaty-backed Gull were tantalizing but inconclusive, and they stimulated us to be more prepared for the third observation, which confirmed the identification.

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## Further Predictions of Species to be Added to the Checklist of the Birds of New York State

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Some two decades ago an article appeared in *The Kingbird* entitled "Trends In the State List Of New York State" (Able 1983 ) At that time the "official" list stood at 423 species (NYSARC 1981).

Able invited five of New York State's most active and knowledgeable birders to each compile a list of the next ten species they believed would be added to the official checklist, and do so in descending order of likelihood. In addition they were requested to do the same with the next five new breeders in the state.

The combined predictions listed 32 potential additions. Of these, a remarkable 15, almost half, have since made it to the current NYS list as follows:

Reddish Egret  
Ross's Goose  
Spotted Redshank  
Black-tailed Godwit  
Red-necked Stint  
Little Stint  
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper  
Mew Gull  
Ross's Gull  
Ancient Murrelet  
Rufous Hummingbird  
Hammond's Flycatcher\*  
Vermilion Flycatcher  
Rock Wren  
Lazuli Bunting

\*Actually, Hammond's Flycatcher, has not as of the date of this publication been acted upon by the New York State Avian Records Committee ( NYSARC) but its approval is a virtual certainty, given the photographic and textual evidence provided by many qualified observers.

As to the breeding predictions, which theoretically should be an easier call, of the 13 species listed, five (38%) attained breeding status subsequently, as follows:

Black Vulture  
Wilson's Phalarope  
Blue Grosbeak  
Boat-tailed Grackle  
White-winged Crossbill

A decade later, the same panel, except for Tony Lauro replacing the deceased Tom Davis, was asked to repeat the process (Levine 1994). By this date the official NYS list stood at 441, with the breeding species total at 241.

That panel listed some 16 species not chosen in 1983 as possibilities, with the balance, of course, from the earlier list. Five (5) of these sixteen (16) new choices have since achieved checklist status. They are:

Long-toed Stint  
Anna's Hummingbird  
Lewis's Woodpecker  
MacGillivray's Warbler  
Cassin's Sparrow \*\*

\*\* As of this date the NYSARC has not yet voted on Cassin's Sparrow, but just as in the case of the Hammond's Flycatcher, the photographic evidence, the wealth of written evidence, and the large number of competent observers, would seem to preclude a negative vote.

Again the task of predicting new breeding birds proved to be more difficult and the panel presented some eleven (11) new choices that were not on the 1983 list. None of them made it. However the breeding list grew to 244 with the addition of Merlin, White-winged Tern, neither of which was predicted, and the inevitable recognition of Monk Parakeet as a legitimate member of the state's avifauna.

Moving on to the current *Checklist of the Birds of New York State* ©1999, it shows a total of 455 species and 244 breeders, the latest additions to that list being Broad-billed Sandpiper, Black-tailed Gull, Anna's Hummingbird and Lazuli Bunting. Add to this the MacGillivray's Warbler noted in the 1999 NYSARC report (*Kingbird* 52 (1):8), and the total is 456 species. The 2000 NYSARC report will raise that total but for the purposes of this article, let us start with the figure 456 species and 244 breeders, so we will have a point of comparison to the previous lists of predictions.



Just a few lines about the "official" New York State checklist. The first one was issued by the NYSARC in 1989 listing 438 species but not specifying breeders, revised in 1991 adding three species for a total of 441 and acknowledging 239 species as breeding or having bred in the state. In 1996, a new checklist was issued, raising the total species to 451, four of which were the result of taxonomic splits, with breeders pegged at 242. The latest "official" list (green in color) was printed in 1999, tallying 455 species with 244 breeders. It is available at the cost of \$1.00 from FNYSBC, P.O. Box 440, Loch Sheldrake, NY 12759, and any reader wishing to follow the development of these checklists is referred to *Bull's Birds of New York State*, pgs. 74-76.

Returning to the predicted species lists, note that they are in descending order of likelihood. The seers were offered the option of listing their choices in AOU Check-list order, but declined to do so. (See Table 1)

A brief analysis of the new lists will show a total of 31 species selected by the panel as candidates for the next ten additions to the checklist, and 13 species as breeding additions. In other words there was more unanimity among the panel (13 out of a possible 25) in the breeding selections, than in the occurrence additions (31 out of a possible 50). Theoretically it should be easier to predict the new breeders, but this has not proven to be the case in the past.

The Little Egret was the only species unanimously chosen on the occurrence list. Band-rumped Storm-Petrel, Pacific Golden-Plover, Yellow-legged Gull, Black-chinned Hummingbird and Allen's Hummingbird were chosen by three panelists. Garganey, Tropical Kingbird, Carolina Chickadee, Virginia's Warbler and Black-throated Sparrow were the choices named on two lists, with the balance of twenty being singles.

On the breeder list, Sandhill Crane was the choice of four panelists, Yellow Rail and Eurasian Collared-Dove chosen by three, Royal Tern, Carolina Chickadee, Summer Tanager, Brewer's Blackbird and Pine Grosbeak were on two lists, with the remaining dozen being unique choices.

One must also point out, that some in the panel have amended their choices over the years. For instance, there are five (5) species that appear on the 1983 occurrence list that do not appear on the current list. They are Black-browed Albatross, Prairie Falcon, Groove-billed Ani, Sprague's Pipit and Hermit Warbler.

Eurasian Kestrel and European Golden-Plover which were both on the 1994 occurrence list are not in the current tables.

As to the possible breeders, the panel has downgraded Horned Grebe, Manx Shearwater, White-faced Ibis, Black-necked Stilt and Lesser Black-backed Gull of the 1983 predictions, and American Avocet, Fox Sparrow and Yellow-headed Blackbird on the 1994 compilation.

This simply means that those eliminated from the previous lists have been superseded by the new choices, but of course are still very much in the running.

Regarding the rationale behind these choices, suffice to say, that the breeding predictions were influenced logically by the knowledge of what species already breed in contiguous states, and indeed may already have bred here, have already been reported but not to NYSARC, or not reported to NYSARC in a form that could be accepted by that body.

Referring to the occurrence prediction list, again this was influenced by the pundits' keen knowledge of what is happening in surrounding areas such as Carolina Chickadee breeding virtually in sight of southern Staten Island (Richmond Co.) but is not yet on the New York checklist, or the rise in records of southwestern hummingbirds in the Southeast, or the question of provenance in the case of Eurasian Collared-Dove. In addition, all on the panel track bird distribution and movement throughout the country by perusing various publications.

In Ken Able's article of 1983, in reference to that first panel's choices, he states "...there is a strong consensus that western North America will continue to be the predominant source of new species in New York." This has certainly proven to be true if one looks at the twenty additions made from the predictions, with half of the list falling into that category. However, the current panel seems to be opting a bit more towards our unique coastal positioning.

Each panelist did give a reason for his selections. In the case of Tom Burke's choice of Kirtland's Warbler he stated rather whimsically, "wouldn't it be nice, before it disappears !" Hardly scientific or logical, but I say "Amen!"

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**Table 1 – The 2002 predicted additions to the New York State Checklist of Birds**

P.A. Buckley	T.W. Burke	W. D'Anna	A.J. Lauro	R.O. Paxton
The predicted next ten additions to the New York State List				
Yellow-legged Gull	Little Egret	Snowy Plover	Little Egret	Eurasian Collared-Dove
Little Egret	Band-rumped	Little Egret	Garganey	Little Egret
Black-chinned	Storm-Petrel	Band-rumped	Pacific Golden –Plover	Garganey
Hummingbird	Pacific Golden-Plover	Storm-Petrel	Brown Noddy	Band-rumped
Allen's Hummingbird	Black-chinned	Band-tailed Pigeon	Common Ground-	Storm-Petrel
Pacific Golden-Plover	Hummingbird	Black-chinned	Dove	Allen's Hummingbird
Fea's Petrel	Tropical Kingbird	Hummingbird	Carolina Chickadee	Whiskered Tern
Tropical Kingbird	Yellow-legged Gull	Black-bellied	Shiny Cowbird	Black-throated Sparrow
Western Wood-Pewee	Violet-green Swallow	Whistling-Duck	Common Ringed Plover	Virginia's Warbler
Carolina Chickadee	McCown's Longspur	Yellow-legged Gull	Black-throated Sparrow	Kelp Gull
Gray Flycatcher	Cassin's Vireo	Allen's Hummingbird	Mongolian Plover	Cassin's Kingbird
	Kirtland's Warbler	Virginia's Warbler		
		Great-tailed Grackle		
The predicted next five documented breeding species.				
Pine Grosbeak	Yellow Rail	Eurasian Collared-Dove	Great Cormorant	Summer Tanager
Eurasian Collared-Dove	Brewer's Blackbird	Sandhill Crane	Little Gull	Sandhill Crane
Sandhill Crane	Sandhill Crane	Brown Pelican	Royal Tern	Eurasian Collared-Dove
Yellow Rail	Royal Tern	Red-necked Grebe	Carolina Chickadee	Brewer's Blackbird
American Pipit	Carolina Chickadee	Summer Tanager	Pine Grosbeak	Yellow Rail

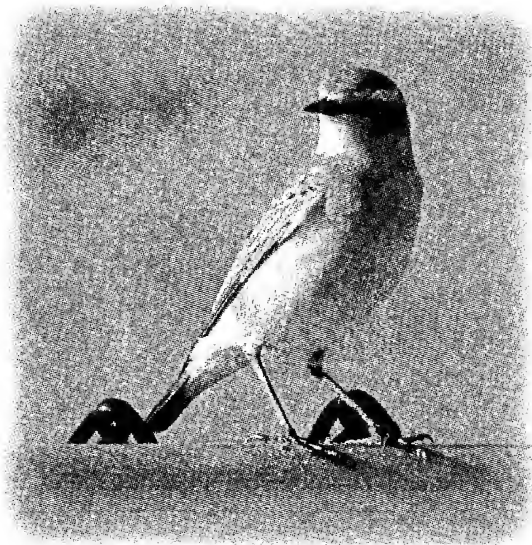
## Scope Photography for Bird Study and Documentation

**Rex G. Stanford**

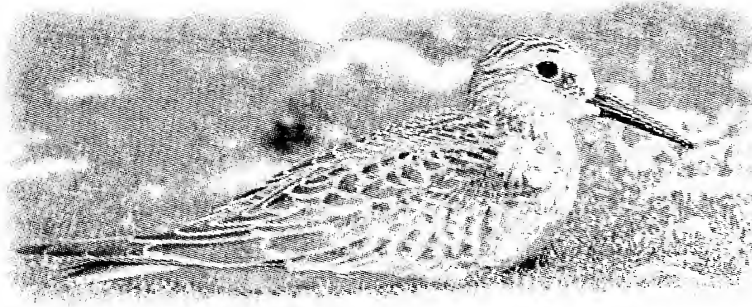
43 Grand St. South, Fl. 2, Westbury, NY 11590-4343  
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Relatively recent very rare (including vagrant and accidental) species for New York State have included: Yellow-billed Loon, Spotted Redshank, Wood Sandpiper, Black-tailed Godwit, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Little Stint, Red-necked Stint, Common Gull (if we allow what is still deemed a subspecies, and we then could include Cayenne Tern, too), Black-tailed Gull, Ross's Gull, Cave Swallow, and Cassin's Sparrow. Photography played an important role in establishing some of these and of additional records. For links to some largely scope-based photos of New York State rarities, see Angus Wilson's New York State Rarities web page and the web site of the New York State Avian Records Committee (NYSARC):

*<http://www.oceanwanderers.com/NYRarities.html> <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/fnysbc/NYSARC/NYSARChome.htm>*



Northern Wheatear  
*Nikon 880 Digital Camera handheld through a  
Kowa TSN-4 Scope with a 20-60x ocular set at 20x*  
©Angus Wilson



Baird's Sandpiper  
*Nikon 880 Digital Camera handheld through a  
Kowa TSN-4 Scope with a 20-60x ocular set at 20x*  
© Angus Wilson

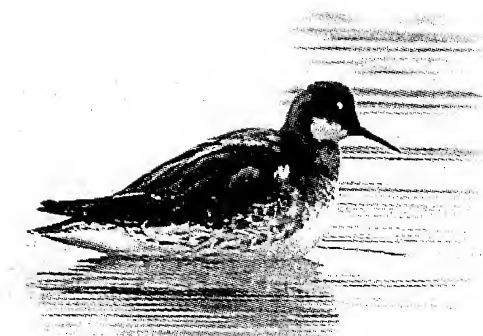
Suppose that you came across one of these rarities or, more exciting still, a species never before seen in New York State or, conceivably, in the lower 48 states. If you found such a bird, a good quality photograph would immensely aid acceptance of the record and, possibly, even initial identification of the species.

This essay focuses on cameras, not video, but video takes, like still ones, can be had by shooting through a scope. The new-generation scopes used by field birders provide bright, high contrast, high resolution images, not merely enlarged ones, and particularly lifelike, vivid color. With modern cameras, the automatic or programmable settings allow, on most occasions, even the neophyte to get good to excellent pictures. Photographs taken with both traditional SLR and the newer digital cameras, hand-held and sighted through telescopes are shown.

### **Three reasons why birders should take pictures**

1. A series of good images, camera or video, provides an objective record of what was encountered, one not subject to the biases that can affect human memory and perception.
2. Photos can very usefully complement field observation by allowing any desired amount of time for the study of details, even those difficult or impossible to examine carefully in the field .
3. Photos can show critical details that were not noticed in the field, details that may support or refute the bird as a rare species.





Red-necked Phalarope  
*Nikon 880 Digital Camera handheld through a  
Kowa TSN-4 Scope with a 20-60x ocular set at 20x*  
©Angus Wilson

## **Photo-documenting birds is easier than you might think!**

**Banishing the specter of vignetting-** Birders whom I meet in the field who see me holding a camera to my scope often say, "But don't you get vignetting?" Vignetting is the appearance of a dark, solid arc, or even an entire dark circle at the outer boundary of the photo image. If the camera's view is wider than the image provided by the eyepiece on the scope, there will be vignetting, even if the camera is perfectly centered on the ocular. Many who do scope photography with digital cameras (i.e., "digiscopers"), know that vignetting can be eliminated by shooting with the camera's zoom lens set for some degree of optical magnification (e.g., 3X), which makes the angle of the camera's view smaller. Documentation oriented birders obsessed over the possibility of vignetting should remember (a) that their task is not to emulate the product produced by professional photographers, but to provide useful pictures of a bird, (b) that vignetting likely will not harm the clarity of the photograph, and (c) that there are ways to reduce or eliminate this problem. Additionally, vignetting easily can be electronically "cropped," if the photo is processed with even a very basic photoprocessing program. The fear of vignetting should never be an excuse for birders not to use their scopes for documentation!

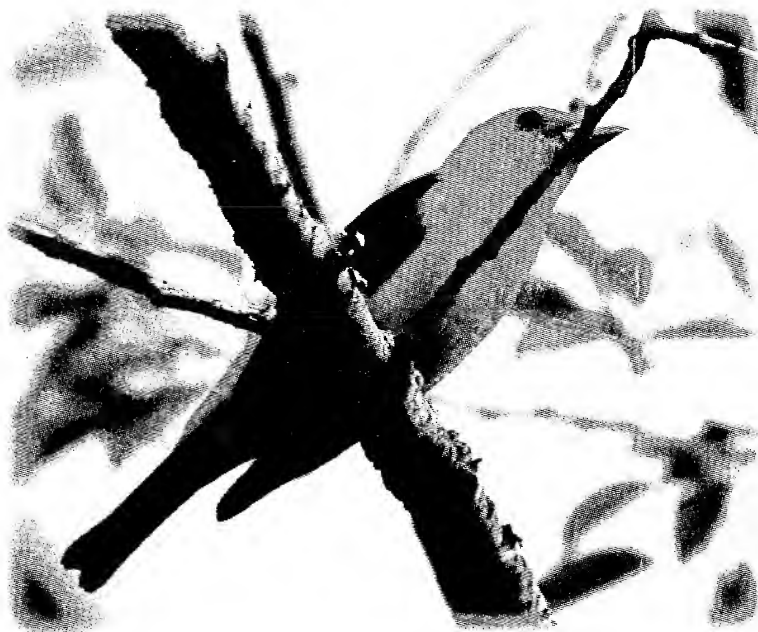
**The flexibility of optics in bird photography-** One can use a great variety of cameras and get decent pictures through a scope if the scope itself is producing good images. I almost always use a 50mm lens on a hand-held 35mm SLR camera when I shoot through my scope, because the image through my wide angle scope squares nicely with what my 50mm camera lens "sees." With practice, a hand-held camera can be used to shoot effectively through many different good

quality scopes, at least if one is willing to tolerate the possibility of vignetting with certain camera/scope combinations. If necessary, one can shoot through a binocular barrel!! Not taking any photo at all guarantees failure in documenting one's exciting find, and a less than optimal photo can be far better than none!

For scope based bird photography one needs a camera, be it film or digital, with a viewfinder/monitor that will show exactly, or almost exactly, what one will get in the picture. The best new cameras of both types are surprisingly light and easy to use, but digital cameras typically are substantially smaller.

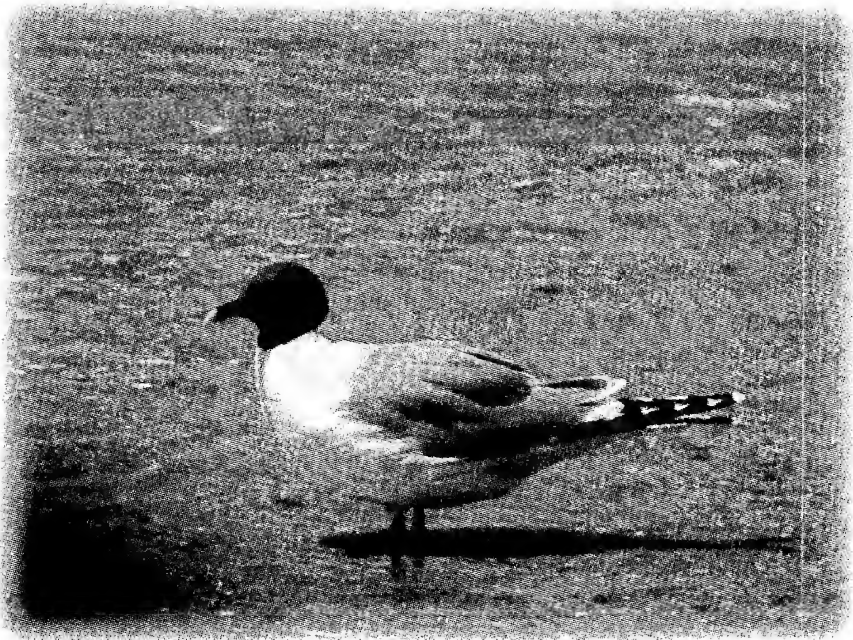
Modern high end cameras, both SLR and digital, typically have automatic and programmable features that can aid very substantially in getting good quality photos even under a variety of difficult circumstances and even in the hands of the photographically challenged.

**Slide versus print film-** Many who use film for bird photography use slide film because it lacks the grain of the print medium. Slide film is preferable to print film for publication purposes, and the relatively low graininess of slides as contrasted with prints—plus the brightness of a slide—can aid in the study of very fine details of, say, the internal markings on scapulars of shorebirds.



Scarlet Tanager  
50mm. lens on handheld SLR through a 30x telescope  
©Rex Stanford

**Some advantages of digital-** The best of the digital cameras provide some distinct advantages for use in photographing through a scope. One important such advantage, present in some, is an optical zoom lens whose diameter fairly well matches that of the ocular lens of certain scopes and can relatively easily and effectively be used to combine the camera's magnification with that of the scope. This can provide startlingly close views of identification details. Very important, with a digital camera one can see instantly what one gets in a given shot, and even if one already has taken a picture, one generally can reuse that part of a memory card if one does not like the result, the memory card being a small card in the camera for recording digital information. The question, "Did I get a good shot of what I had hoped to photograph?" is critical to the birder, especially the one concerned with documentation, and that question is most usefully answered in the field. Even if focus and exposure are correct, a shot may be wrong in terms of a bird's pose. For example, a Curlew Sandpiper dips its head and the diagnostic bill into the water in the split instant between triggering the shot and



Sabine's Gull

*50mm. lens on handheld SLR through a 30x telescope*

©Rex Stanford



the opening of the shutter, but one does not realize what has happened! Using a suitable digital camera, you can see the result then and there, and if the result is unsatisfactory and the bird is cooperative, the chance may come again.

Despite some problems with digital as noted later, digiscoping surely has a distinct advantage in terms of sheer optical power if the camera has adequate optical zoom capability. What is more, some modern, high-end digital cameras provide wonderfully high resolution. Some digital cameras also come with an internal program for the sharpening of images. Add to that, with digital, one can dump the photos onto a computer drive, modify them—without one hopes, creative additions!!!-in a variety of ways using a photo program, to crop, eliminate any vignetting, change the brightness, enhance the contrast, send them via e-mail, put them up on a web site, and even print them oneself. What is more, one can have a huge number of light-rich images, ready to view without a projector other than a computer and its monitor, just like slides. The contrast with print photos can be astounding, making the latter seem “flat” in their lack of brilliance. With the crisp images now available with digital, with the small size and low weight of even high function digital cameras, and with the computer technology available for image storage, processing, viewing, distribution, and printing, this is truly a new age for bird photography. Although the initial financial investment for good quality digital is substantial, the ability to reuse the memory cards means that buying film and paying for film processing can be a thing of the past.

**Some digital drawbacks-** A widely recognized drawback to digital cameras is that, especially under bright sun conditions or with glare, the Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) monitor may provide a less than adequate view that sometimes makes it difficult to focus through the monitor. This is one reason that digiscopers often use the camera's autofocus, instead of the manual scope focus guided through the LCD monitor, to fine tune the focus *after* they have initially focused the scope's image visually while looking through the scope. Special hoods or shades may be used for the LCD monitors, but they are not always fully adequate.

Another widely heard complaint from digiscopers concerns the very limited depth of field generally encountered in digiscoped images, due, in part, to the low light level provided by joint camera-scope magnification. Depth of field refers to the physical distance over which an image remains in focus. For example, low depth of field in bird photography could mean, in the case of a bird turned substantially toward the camera, that although its bright eye is delightfully focused, its scapulars, with their identification relevant markings, are not clearly focused, much less its hind parts. If you cannot get the whole bird in focus, you might first take pictures that focus the details most important for identification. You can also try for a side-on image, so that features along the bird's entire length are roughly equidistant from the camera and hence can be focused simultaneously. It is unwise, though, to wait for the optimum photo opportunity before taking pictures, because it may not come before the bird leaves.



Rose-breasted Grosbeak  
*50mm. lens on handheld SLR through a 30x telescope*  
©Rex Stanford

### **Getting the best from your equipment**

**Safety precautions-** In scope photography the possibility of impact damage to the scope's ocular or to the camera lens may exist because the lenses of these two pieces of equipment must be in very close proximity during photography. A variety of devices, homemade and commercial, intended to center and stabilize the camera's lens relative to the scope's eyepiece, involve a spacer of some kind between these two lenses. That spacer may, depending on its character, reduce the likelihood of lens damage if there should be bumps to the camera/scope system. Naturally, such a spacer should not be considered a license for such bumping! With these and other common sense precautions, the equipment used in scope photography should have a long life and little need for repair. Several digiscoping web sites discuss equipment precautions.

**Stabilizing the equipment-** Aside from safety related considerations, it is essential to stabilize the camera at the scope's ocular. If there is optical magnification in both camera and scope, even greater stability is needed, so some digis-



copers use simple, homemade or commercial adapter rings . Others use elaborate, occasionally cumbersome, mechanical devices that can require long set-up time or must remain attached to the scope. However one stabilizes, digital cameras that have internal focusing and zoom are naturals for those who wish to use scopes to photograph birds, because they can zoom or focus or auto focus .even if stabilized at the scope's eyepiece. Some digiscopers are able to obtain superb photos without any mechanical stabilization device, simply by hand-holding the camera up to the scope.

When doing scope photography, I use a hand-held 35mm SLR camera with 50mm lens, forgo any adapter, and still get good shots most of the time, shots that often very substantially exceed in quality the needs of simple documentation. Because I have learned to work without any mechanical adapter ring or stabilization device, I am able to work with a wide range of high quality scopes. I first compose the shot in the scope, tighten the pan head . then carefully focus the subject in the scope, with no camera interposed. My camera earlier has been set to manual focus and its lens at infinity, where it will stay. Then I squarely center the scope ocular's image in the camera's viewfinder and, still using that viewfinder, manually fine tune the focus by using the scope's focus ring. All the while, I press the camera's lens firmly against the rubber casing of my scope's ocular (sans eye cup, which I have removed). Finally, with manual arm support of the camera to counteract the pressure of pushing the trigger, and while bracing my arms against my rib cage, I hold my breath (to avoid shoulder/arm movement and to help brace things) and trigger the shot. The same approach should be useful with a hand-held digital camera. Quickness and flexibility are reasons I use this method, but its reliable use requires some practice. Having the camera lens at infinity before it is placed to the scope's visually focused eyepiece means easier, quicker, fine focusing of the scope once the camera is in place.

In my personal use of a hand- held camera, with my specific equipment, simply holding the camera reasonably firmly against the scope's eyepiece helps greatly in stabilization, and I never have had trouble with banging, scraping, or scratching either lens. The likelihood of harm of this kind will depend on the characteristics of particular lens casings and, naturally, on how carefully the equipment is handled. Considerable caution and common sense always should be used here.

An angled-eyepiece scope may be somewhat helpful in scope photography, thanks to its erect eyepiece providing some camera support, but a straight-through scope can work very well, too. Tripod stability, though, is essential. A solid, stable tripod is an extremely wise investment. In a very strong, gusty wind any tripod will need substantial stabilization, both against vibration and against the possibility of its toppling.

In order to prevent movement and vibration—and, hence, blur—potentially created by pushing the camera's trigger, some birders use a remote cable release for their shots, especially when the light level requires long exposure.

Under reasonable light, a cable release may be most useful for those who have the camera firmly attached to the scope in some manner and thus have both hands free to manipulate the release.

**Fast shutter speed-** Digiscopers and film camera users generally should plan to shoot at a fast shutter speed in order to reduce the consequences of any form of vibration. When a camera's optical zoom capacity plus the scope's magnification are combined, one has a superb vibration/movement amplifier that could ruin a picture. Shutter speed can be boosted in the following ways: (i) use of high-sensitivity (i.e., high-ISO) film (I regularly use 400 ISO film); (ii) selection of the camera's maximum aperture for more light to enter, with shutter speed then being automatically maximized in response to the full, available level of ambient light but with depth of field reduced; and (iii) whenever possible, working under good light, which also favorably affects a photo's contrast and may increase depth of field, at least if aperture size is not preset. Approach (iii) can, of course, be effectively combined with either of the others .

**Minimal magnification for the purpose at hand** -Persons interested in identification often need detail in birds, and detail is what optical magnification, used responsibly, can supply. Magnification is easy—perhaps too easy—to get when the optical zoom power of a digital camera is combined, multiplicatively, with the optical power of a birding scope. There are, though, serious drawbacks to ultra-magnification. Higher magnification lowers the level of available light. It therefore can reduce the ability to focus , reduce depth of field if it forces a large aperture, and decrease the shutter speed, allowing movement and vibration blur. Also, the magnification that reduces the light level will amplify any movement in the system! When magnification is treated respectfully, it shows its good side, but if it is over exploited, it can show its bad one. A conceptually related maxim is, if you really need very high magnification, “Magnify maximally while the sun shines,” that is, when there is excellent light. If the light is less than very good, one ordinarily should, in the interest of image quality, stay away from the highest scope-zoom levels.

A number of digiscopers routinely zoom down to 20X scope magnification when, as is customary, they use their digital camera's optical zoom at 3X to do away with vignetting. This combination of camera and scope magnification provides sufficient total optical power for many digiscoping situations, but if one must go further, very bright light may help. The same is true of high quality, bright image optics.

The difficulties associated with ultra magnification do not stop with the optical considerations just discussed. Under very high magnification there can be a problem in locating the bird using the narrow view-angle provided, and this problem sometimes occurs even if one first sights it under lower magnification and then zooms up. Lost time can mean a lost shot. Finally, there is the fact that high magnification, more than just magnifying the bird, also magnifies the image distorting effects of the atmospheric convection or heat waves that are visible on hot, sunny days.



Dunlin  
*50mm. lens on handheld SLR  
through a 30x telescope  
©Rex Stanford*

**Getting photos in the proper light-** When one encounters a rarity, quick setup for shots can be important, but suitable lighting conditions also are important, for showing detail. If one has the time (or can change position), one looks for light that does not create undue glare, that is not opposite the photographer, and that is not from more or less directly overhead. A subject can look chromatically flat and appear featureless if the light is from overhead, so relatively low angle light often is desirable. Taking pictures with strong backlighting or a bright background can, with simple automatic exposure, cause the subject to be underexposed and look murky and dark with few, if any, visible details. Conversely, a dark background can cause the subject to be overexposed, with light washing out details and color. Users of modern 35mm SLR cameras and of high-end digital cameras often can finesse these backlight problems through implementing particular “metering options” as explained in the manual. These are usually easy to use and can give special weight to the exposure needs of a particular, specifiable, area of the frame.

**Redundancy-**Because what one thinks will be a good shot can turn out not to be—or even can show an undesired pose, as when the bird suddenly has stuck its head under water—it can be important, in filming rarities, to take more

than one shot of any and all desirable poses or views. If you are using film and follow this advice, you may feel that you are wasting film, but you can never be sure ahead of time that a given, important shot will turn out as you expected. If you are working in digital, you can view your shots on-site, and your camera presumably will allow you to overwrite a shot that proves inadequate. Both digital and film photographers should note that having more than one shot showing a particular relevant feature—especially, a somewhat subtle one—can be important to definitive identification because such a feature's presence across more than one shot can demonstrate that the feature is not an artifact. There is still another reason for digital photographers to exercise special caution before overwriting, on site, good, clear shots. The photographer not familiar with all the individual features that differentiate a rare species from a similar common one, might overwrite a seemingly "redundant" shot that is unique in capturing a critical identification feature (e.g., the lack of webs on the foot of a small calidris sandpiper)! Scope photography beginners, please note: In the absence of adequate practice with non-rarities, taking multiple pictures can play a major role in ensuring good, clear photos of a rarity. All this implies the need for carrying adequate supplies.

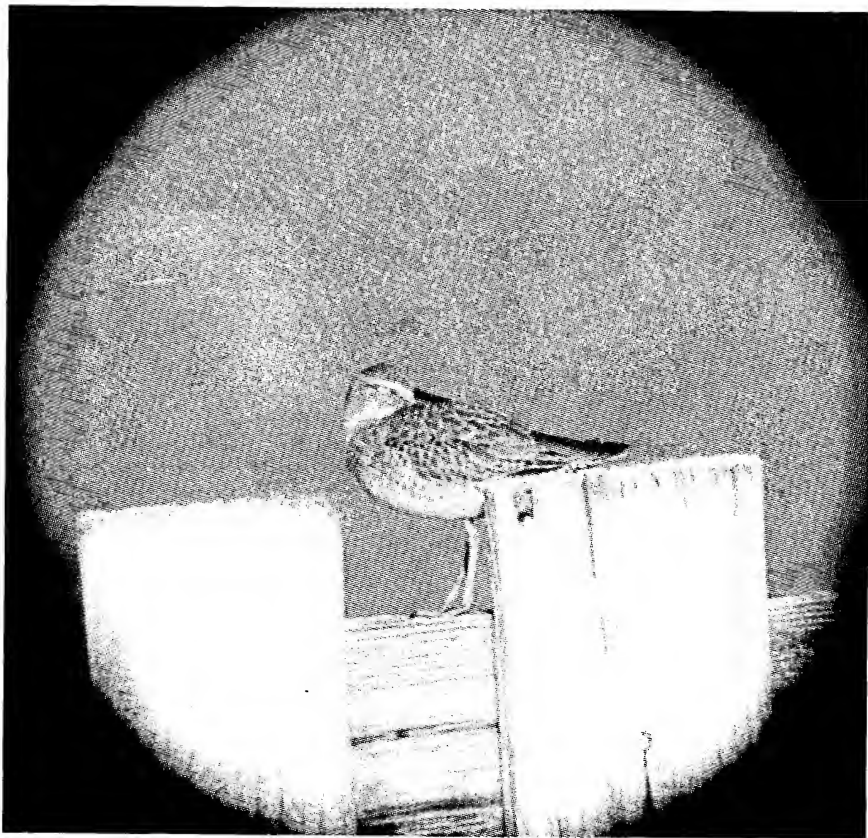
### **Photo-documentation for Records Committees**

Sending to the New York State Avian Records Committee (NYSARC) one's photo-documentation of rarities is important for advancing public knowledge of what species have appeared in this state. It should become part of the ethic of birding. Submission of photos is simple and easy. Tell when, where, equipment, any special camera settings or picture processing, under what lighting/weather conditions, and by whom the photos were taken. Name the species reported, and pinpoint its location in the frame, if there are multiple birds. You also may elect to describe photographic details that support your identification (or even include on-site field notes that provide supplementary observations), but, if the photos would seem to stand by themselves in establishing the record, the additional material may be considered optional. Birders whose photos are accepted as part of a state record can take justified pride in an important accomplishment

### **Some ethical considerations in bird photography**

One can only hope that the trend toward photographing birds does not result in an increase in the already substantial toll that certain bird photographers sometimes take on the creatures they study and on their habitats. Among the sometimes observed questionable deeds of some photographers are: (a) cutting away obscuring vegetation where increased visibility could pose a threat to a bird by destroying the safety of its roost or could harm its potential for successful nesting and rearing of young, (b) inflicting stress or harassment on migratory species such as flushing migrating shorebirds to get an on-the-wing shot, (c) placing oneself and one's equipment in front of birders who want to see a bird, (d) chasing, even repeatedly, after birds that flee one's too close approach, such as pursuing a





Short-billed Dowitcher

*75-300 mm. zoom on handheld SLR*

*through a 30x telescope*

*Note: The extreme vignette does not effect the photo*

*©Rex Stanford*



Snowy Owl up and down the beach, and (e) trying to get extremely close to a rare bird even at risk of stressing or flushing it, thereby potentially denying other observers the opportunity to see a much desired species. Others may have their own special “favorites” in this category.

Actions that threaten or harm the well-being of the birds or that degrade the quality of their habitat should be avoided by birders, be they photographers or not. Likewise, actions that assail or harm the rights of other human beings, including those of other birders and of property owners, should be deemed beyond the pale unless explicit permission is had from the others potentially affected by the actions. Fortunately, there are many responsible photographers who do all they can to avoid harm to the creatures they photograph, who obey relevant laws, and who are very considerate of others who may be present and of the property rights of land owners.

Although the focus of this paper has been on getting non-photographing birders to start taking pictures with their scopes, it is also hoped that certain birders already into bird photography might change the ways they do it. Those who have been lured by small telephoto lenses into the very close approaches that can disturb or flush birds and that can irritate other birders should very seriously consider switching to scope photography for appropriate subjects. With the scope’s vastly greater optical power will come greater fairness to the birds and to other birders, and the resulting pictures will likely, in many instances, be far more suitable for documentation, study, and enjoyment. It can be hoped, too, that those who use traditional long lenses directly attached to cameras might consider the advantages, for many situations—especially very distant birds—of digiscoping.

An important virtue of scope photography is that it allows high quality shots *at the same distances at which we normally observe and study birds in the field*, or at even less a distance if the photographer also uses a digital camera’s optical zoom. Normal scope viewing distances do not unduly disturb or flush the birds. A digiscoping birder confronted by a rare shorebird and standing at the same range as other scope using birders sometimes may even have to back off to get the full bird into the shot! With the optics discussed here we can, at unthreatening distances, get images ranging from very adequate to frame filling. By waiting patiently, without intervention, for the bird to do what we wish to photograph, by consideration of the rights of others, by sparing the habitat, and by zealously guarding the best interests of the birds, we will be advancing a different style of bird photography than we sometimes see in the field.

### **Recommended Paper**

McGowan, Kevin J. (Autumn, 2001). Snap judgments. *Living Bird*, 40-44. (Provides an account of documenting rarities with a pocket digital camera. McGowan and his son, Jay, have taken many fine bird photos using scope photography, and some may be found on McGowan’s photos webpage, <http://birds.cornell.edu/crows/brdphoto.htm>)

# Live Prey in Buteo Nests

Scott Crocoll

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Raptorial birds (hawks and owls) are usually predatory throughout their annual life cycles. During the nestling phase of the breeding season the male of the species typically brings dead prey to the nest, which the female then feeds to the nestlings (Newton 1979). Live prey have been recorded as being brought to raptor nests on rare occasions (Gossett and Smith 1993, Spofford and Amadon 1993.) Herein, I report two more instances of live prey at nests.

Live prey have been recorded previously at Broad-winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus*) nests (Matray 1974) but not at Red-shouldered Hawk (*B. lineatus*) nests. I observed an Eastern garter snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*) being brought to a Broad-wing nest on 16 Jun 1979. I climbed the nest immediately after the snake was delivered and found the snake belly-up in the nest. When I attempted to pick it up, it turned over and slithered out of the nest and fell to the ground. This nest contained 3 young aged 10, 10 and 8 days. Both parents were in adult plumage.

On 18 May 1979, I visited a Red-shouldered Hawk nest. Upon climbing the nest, I found one egg and a nestling approximately 7 days old. The adult present at the nest site, circled and called and occasionally made close passes at me (presumably the female based on behavior; Crocoll 1994). Shortly after I climbed to the nest, the other parent (presumably the male) arrived at the nest carrying an Eastern chipmunk (*Tamias striatus*). The adult did not notice my presence until it landed on the nest with its prey. It promptly jumped off the nest and flew away. The live chipmunk left the nest, scurried down the tree and disappeared into the brush. I did not record the ages of the Red-shouldered Hawk parents.

Live prey at these nests was rare (RSHK - 7% visits to 3 nests, n=14; BWHK - 0.006% visits to 14 nests, n=170) and I concur with Spofford and Amadon (1993) that it probably is an incidental occurrence. However, it is interesting to note that at least with the Broad-winged Hawk that an adult-plumaged bird brought the prey so that it was not necessarily an inexperienced hunter bringing food to the nest. Also, the data presented both here (the Red-shouldered Hawk nest) and by Matray (1974), at Broad-winged Hawk nests, suggest that males may be the more likely sex to bring live prey. This deserves further observations to corroborate.

## Acknowledgments

The author wishes to thank Joe Schmutz and two anonymous reviewers for commenting on an earlier version of this manuscript.

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## CORRIGENDA

The name of John Fritz was  
inadvertently omitted from the  
Table of Contents in Volume 52(1).  
He was co-author, with  
Douglas J. Futuyma, of:  
“Hammond’s Flycatcher (*Empidonax hammondi*) on  
Long Island, 27-28 Oct 2001  
New York State’s First Record”

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## POET'S CORNER

Whip-Poor-Will

All that night under the Flower Moon  
The Whip-poor-will called his name,  
“Whipowill, Whipowill, Whipowill”

with force on the “Whip” and “Will”  
he seemed insistent on something  
and why would this bird,  
hardly seen in daylight,  
want darkness to whistle his name  
two hundred twelve times?  
I counted as I lay in my sleeping bag.

after a moment, he was going again.  
three hundred ninety-one.  
“Whipowill, Whipowill, Whipowill,”  
with hardly a pause for breath.

By this time the moon had passed  
Between two branches of oak  
And I was sure the bird had moved nearer  
Maybe he was trying get it through my head  
“Whipowill, Whipowill,, Whipowill”  
One thousand eighty-eight.

He started again, the same old story  
So I turned on my side.  
Next, I was hearing flute notes,  
thrush music.

Maxwell Corydon Wheat , Jr.

## Highlights of the Winter Season 2001-2002

**Willie D'Anna**

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### Weather Effects

Unseasonable? You bet it was! It was hardly winter at all. Average temperatures for December were about seven degrees above normal. The average for January varied from seven degrees above (Region 1) to over ten degrees above (Regions 5 & 6). Has *any* month ever deviated by ten degrees from the norm before? It was the warmest winter in 70 years in Regions 1 & 2 (incredibly, there were two winters that were actually warmer) and the warmest on record in Regions 5 & 9. Birders were able to take advantage of the mild conditions as it was also very dry, especially in Regions 7, 9, 10 and parts of Region 3. Except for parts of Regions 1 & 6, snow cover was minimal. Once again, the Great Lakes illustrated how locally intense their effect upon the weather can be. Buffalo was on the way to the least snow for December ever. That all changed on Christmas eve when the first of over **81** inches of snow fell in only five days, changing December from the least to the most snowiest month ever! Not to be outdone, the Tug Hill Plateau, at the east end of Lake Ontario in Region 6, received **127** inches of snow in the final week of the month. While these lake-effect snow events sound devastating, their effect upon the birds was very localized and certainly lessened by the frequently above-freezing temperatures of January.

The mild season was a boon to winter listers. Many species of waterbirds lingered and half-hardies were especially numerous. Several species lingered exceptionally late, into January in many cases – Forster's Tern and Northern Rough-winged Swallow in Region 1; Common Moorhen, American Woodcock, Parasitic Jaeger, and American Pipit in Region 2; Common Moorhen, *both* yellowlegs, Dunlin, American Pipit, and Tennessee Warbler in Region 3; Osprey, Dunlin, and American Woodcock in Region 5; Pine Warbler in Region 6; Savannah Sparrow in Region 7; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher in Region 8; Osprey and Wood Thrush in Region 9; and 15 species of warblers in Region 10. And then, to top it off, north-bound migration started earlier in February with several sightings and in some cases, large flocks of geese, Killdeers, robins, grackles, blackbirds, and cowbirds. It may have even started in January for Turkey Vultures in Region 1 and Common Grackles in Region 8. Add in a nice selection of rarities and it was one of the finest winters ever to be afield in New York.

### Vultures

Black Vultures in Region 9 continue to increase – a record 182 were on the Southern Orange County CBC, plus 76 on the Putnam County CBC. Reports



in southeastern New York are increasing at a much faster pace than elsewhere. The species remains very rare in Region 1 and reports in Regions 2 & 5 are still pretty much restricted to the Lake Ontario hawkwatches. The much commoner Turkey Vulture is also increasing and this has been noticed in every Region. The species has wintered in Regions 2 & 9 for several years but now winter reports are popping up elsewhere including Regions 1, 3, 4, 5 and a Region 7 report from 14 February, the latter particularly interesting for this northerly Region. Region 1 Editor Morgante suggested that some January sightings there were early migrants, since they were seen along the traditional lakeplain migration routes, where they had not been reported earlier. We do not often think of January birds of many species as early migrants (Horned Lark comes to mind). Perhaps the vultures are adjusting to the warmer climate of the past decade. If they can survive this far north, it gives them the advantage of arriving on the breeding grounds earlier than potential competitors.

## Diversity

If we counted the total number of species in each Region this winter and then added up all of the Regions, I would bet that this sum would be a winter season record. There are always uncommon and rare winter visitors that turn up in one or two Regions. This season, however, saw a plethora of birds with every Region getting into the act. For years now I have wondered what would turn up if at least one birder in each Region did a Big January (that is, try to see as many species as possible in January). Although my musing will still have to wait for an answer, a glimpse into that world was provided this winter.

The following discussion refers to birds reported in January or February. Horned Grebes were found in seven Regions with high counts of 73 in Region 1 and 44 in each of Regions 5 & 7. Great Blue Herons wintered in every Region with a concentration of 51 in Region 1 and 16 in Region 9. Tundra Swans are much more uncommon in eastern New York so recording them in seven Regions was unusual as were the high counts of 228 in Region 1, 155 in Region 2, and 50+ in Region 6. Away from the coast, Brant are rare in winter but this season they were found in four Regions. The number of Ring-necked Ducks was impressive – at least six Regions had double-digit counts led by 68 in Region 7. Red-shouldered Hawks are a tough find in winter – I suspect that the reports from every Region this season is unprecedented for the species. Killdeer in seven Regions and American Woodcocks in five are quite a lot with January reports of the latter in Regions 2 & 9 most unusual. It has been the thinking for many years, occasionally expressed in this column, that Northern Saw-whet Owls are more numerous than reports indicated. Finally, more birders are putting an effort into proving the hypothesis. This little owl was located in six Regions with multiple reports in three and a count of 12 on the Little Lakes CBC. in Region 2. Despite its secretive habits, Hermit Thrushes were found in six Regions. Unprecedented would probably describe the American Pipits found in ~~six~~ Regions. This is only

the tip of the iceberg. There were many more winter discoveries sprinkled throughout the state.

Region 2 birders, who have made a tradition out of Big Januarys, demonstrated that most of the species just listed occur every winter in their Region. In the past, many of the same birds have been labeled “half-hardies” with the presumption that they occur in winter irregularly and normally cannot survive through to spring. However, that assumption was largely based upon December sightings not being followed up with January or February reports. What the Region 2 birders have shown is that the lack of later winter sightings may be due to a lack of birder effort. Perhaps these birds are not so much foolhardy as they are “full-hardies”!

### **Traditional Winter Species**

Unlike the many uncommon species sighted this season, some of the traditional winter species were less in evidence. Winter “raptors”, like Rough-legged Hawks and Northern Shrikes, were relatively scarce and after a fine late fall showing, Snowy Owls really thinned out. Short-eared Owl sightings were also reduced but Long-eared Owls and Northern Saw-whet Owls were up. Mild open conditions usually means fewer field birds (Horned Larks, Snow Buntings, Lapland Longspurs). That was the case this year though there were still a couple of good counts – flocks of 500 Snow Buntings in Region 1 and over 1000 in Region 7. Winter finches are so irregular that it is difficult to classify them as “traditional”. They bucked the trend of our other winter residents and put in a moderately good showing. Small to relatively large flocks of Pine Grosbeaks continued in most of the Regions that recorded them in the fall. Likewise, Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks were found in most Regions (200 max for the latter in Region 5). Sightings of the crossbills were far fewer though both species did occur in over half the Regions with White-wingeds slightly outnumbering Reds. After a strong fall showing, Common Redpolls became much more localized during the winter. Still, all but the southernmost Regions 9 & 10 had flocks of at least 70 birds roaming around. Regions 5, 6, 7 & 8 reported flocks of 500 to 1000 or more. Not surprisingly, several Hoary Redpolls were reported.

### **Rarities**

There were some outstanding rarities to chase around the state this season. The usual California Gull on the Niagara River stayed later than ever recorded before. So did a group of 12 Sandhill Cranes in January, a record count for Region 1. The Niagara Frontier Region added a first January Northern Gannet, a Laughing Gull, and a first record and long-staying Townsend’s Solitaire. Region 2 had their own January Gannet, an adult male Common Eider (an exceptionally rare plumage inland in New York), a first January Parasitic Jaeger, and a Western Kingbird. Their rarest, however, was a Western Grebe at venerable Hamlin Beach

SP. Region 3's Northern Gannet was even more exceptional since it was away from the Great Lakes, and a flock of 18 Sandhill Cranes is a Regional record and likely a state record as well. A Cattle Egret in Region 5 was their latest ever and a Pomarine Jaeger only their second in January with a Black-headed Gull rounding out the list. Most interesting in Region 6 was a reported Barrow's x Common Goldeneye hybrid. While Gray Jay is not unusual for this Region, one in the St. Lawrence Valley is exceptional, and Great Gray Owl was entirely unexpected in a non-invasion year for the species. The first Region 7 record of Say's Phoebe on 24 Feb would be the latest ever in New York, if accepted by NYSARC. this species is very rare past January. The second Region 7 record of Eared Grebe, a very late Red Phalarope, and a raptor-lover's raptor, Gyrfalcon, were other highlights in Region 7. Moving southward into the balmy climes of Regions 9 & 10, hummingbirds were some of the highlights. Region 9's Rufous continued into January and an *Archilochus* hummingbird (Ruby-throated or Black-chinned) lingered to 23 Dec. The date would be record-late for the former and the species would be a state first if the latter. While very similar, the two species can sometimes be separated with a good view and a heavy dose of caution. Black-chinneds have increased markedly in the southeastern U.S. in winter and should not be totally unexpected in New York. Region 10's two Calliope Hummingbirds continued from fall until 26 Dec with one staying a day later. Region 9's February Black-throated Blue Warbler represents only the second ever in New York for that month. A hybrid gull, Black-headed x ?, is an exceptional and fascinating discovery. Region 10's White-winged Dove and Ash-throated Flycatcher continue a remarkable number of reports of these species in recent years. A record late *Empidonax* flycatcher, tentatively identified as a Least, was studied by Kenn Kaufman who has a greater depth of knowledge of the genus than most. A February Tennessee Warbler was only the second winter record for the Region and the first in the state for that month. A Pacific Loon lingered for over two weeks to the delight of many birders, and what is going on with "Eurasian" Green-winged Teal? Sightings have increased in the Region but this season up to six individuals were found! Region 10 also had a hybrid – believed to be Tufted Duck x scaup.

A tentatively identified Slaty-backed Gull lingered for two weeks in Region 9. Unfortunately, it was not until the last day it was seen that it was confirmed (see article this issue). Three days later, what may have been the same bird was identified at a landfill in Region 3. Word spread rapidly after both sightings and birders scoured the two Regions in the ensuing days but to no avail. There is only one previous record in New York, a bird seen on the Niagara River in 1992.

My choice for Bird-of-the-Season (BOTS) goes to the Long-billed Murrelet found in Region 3. This bird was much more cooperative than the gull(s), staying for four days and allowing numerous birders to add this Asian species to their lifelists . If accepted by NYSARC, it will be only the second ever in New York. The first was in October 1993 on the St. Lawrence River reservoir above the Moses-Saunders Dam.

## REGION 1 – NIAGARA FRONTIER

**Mike Morgante**

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The first three weeks of December 2001 were unseasonably mild and a continuation of the mild, snow-free November. However, on the 24th, much colder temperatures arrived with record setting snowfall. The average temperature for the month was 35.9° F, which was 6.8° above normal. Local residents will likely never forget the "lake effect" snow onslaught from 24–28 December in which 81.5" of snow fell and virtually shut down the areas most heavily hit. Monthly precipitation at Buffalo-Niagara International Airport was 6.48", 2.81" more than usual, and it was the highest snow total for any month in history, with 82.7", 58.4" more than normal. Very strong winds out of the southwest occurred on the 1st and 20th, bringing windblown jaegers and gulls to the eastern end of Lake Erie.

January was very mild as the average temperature was 31.6°, 7.1° above normal. The monthly precipitation was 3.54", 0.38" above normal, with 13.7" of snow, 12.6" less than normal. The majority of this fell in the last two days. The second warmest January in 50 years allowed the December snows to melt completely by the 27th without any flooding. A major ice storm hit the suburbs north of Buffalo on the 29th and 30th, toppling numerous trees and power lines. Lake Erie remained open throughout the month.

The mild trend continued in February except for a severe windstorm to start the month, with gusts above 60 mph that, coupled with an ice storm, left many homes without power. The average temperature was 31.2°, 5.3° above normal, and the monthly precipitation was near normal at 3.15", 0.73" above normal. Snowfall totaled 17.2", 1.2" below normal, with much of it coming from a late season lake-effect snow on the 27th. Lake Erie remained open throughout the winter for only the fifth time in the last 75 years.

The winter was the mildest in 70 years and only two other winters were warmer. Waterfowl counts were higher than usual as most ponds were ice-free until late December. A very high count of Hooded Mergansers was tallied on the Jamestown CBC and notable counts of Northern Shoveler, Ruddy Duck and American Coot were made. A downside of prolonged fall weather was evidenced by a Pied-billed Grebe found dead after all open water froze at Sinking Ponds Nature Sanctuary in early January.

The mild weather was also likely responsible for numerous species lingering in the Region much longer than usual. Unusually late reports were made this winter for American Bittern, Forster's Tern, Eastern Phoebe, Northern Rough-winged Swallow and Common Yellowthroat. Turkey Vultures are very rarely reported in mid-winter, but there were multiple reports of birds likely wintering and also of early migrants.

Lake Erie did not freeze, thus the buildup of waterfowl at the mouth of the Niagara River was not significant. However, a pair of **Harlequin Ducks**, including



an adult male, was found at this location in late January to the delight of many birders. An immature male **King Eider**, infrequently reported in the Region, was found on Lake Ontario. The group of Tundra Swans wintering along the Niagara grew to 228, the highest recorded number in winter from this location. A somewhat early **Greater White-fronted Goose** was found at Iroquois NWR in February and several flocks of migrant Snow Geese were also notable at the end of February.

Bald Eagles and Merlins maintained their recent increase in wintering records. Five Merlins wintered at the SUNY Buffalo campus, a traditional roosting location. Rough-legged Hawk reports were fewer than recent years and no Northern Goshawk reports were received.

Gulls lingered on the Niagara River later than usual this winter. High numbers were reported throughout January, including a rough estimate by Willie D'Anna of 50,000 Bonaparte's Gulls on the 13th. Gordon Bellerby remarked that this was an atypical winter for Bonaparte's on the river as his fly-past counts of this species are usually very low in late January but he had his winter maximum of 13,300 on 25 January, indicating they stayed a few weeks longer than usual. Perhaps there is a relationship with Lake Erie not freezing. There were several **Black-headed Gull** reports, but possibly involving one individual. Multiple sightings of **Sabine's Gulls** and Black-legged Kittiwakes occurred. **California Gull** lingered through the winter, with the last report on 18 February marking the latest winter date for the Region. A **Laughing Gull** was found at Dunkirk Harbor in early January.

While scanning some fields in Pomfret during the Dunkirk-Fredonia CBC on 1 January, Joanne Goetz was amazed to find 12 **Sandhill Cranes**. They remained in the area until 21 January, allowing many birders to see them. This was the first January report for the Region and also the highest count. While this was very unexpected, perhaps we should be not be so surprised as this species breeds and some winter at Long Point, Ontario, "just across" Lake Erie from Dunkirk.

The bird of the season was a **Townsend's Solitaire** that wintered at Bond Lake Park in Lewiston. David Mueller found the bird on 5 December and made the identification after reviewing field guides at home. Willie D'Anna confirmed the sighting on the 23rd and numerous birders went out to try to see it. The bird remained through February but was not always easy to find. It fed on wild grapes and highbush cranberry and was occasionally heard singing softly. The solitaire was the first for the Region.

Common Redpolls and Pine Siskins were present in moderate numbers. Some Pine Grosbeaks remained after the large migration noted in November, while White-winged Crossbills and Evening Grosbeaks were only found in a few places. Purple Finch numbers were low.

Other rarities not previously mentioned included Northern Gannet, Bohemian Waxwing, Fox Sparrow and "Oregon" Junco.



## CONTRIBUTORS

Robert Andrie, Gordon Bellerby, Ray Budniewski, Bill Burch, Carolyn Cass, Sylvia Clarke, Willie D'Anna, Michael DeSha, Brett Ewald, Tom Ferraro, Kurt Fox, Mike Galas, Joanne Goetz, Tom Harper, Don Harris, Paul Hess, Jeff Holbrook, Linda Holmes, Dave Junkin, Aron Kehlenbeck, Brendan Klick, Karen Landau, Tom LeBlanc, Steve McLaughlin (weather), Dick Miga, Miley Miller (MMi), Mike Morgante (MMo), Terry Mosher, David Mueller, Susan & Tom O'Donnell, Sean Phelan, Vivian Pitzrick, Betsy Potter, Fran Rew, Gerry Rising, Richard Rosche, Jack Skalicky, David Suggs (Buffalo RBA), Bob Sundell, Joe Thill, Mike Turisk, William Watson, Mary Jean Welser, Peter Yoerg.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AlSP – Allegany SP, CATT; BeSP – Beaver I SP, ERIE; BuSP – Buckhorn I SP, ERIE; BWWTP – Batavia Waste Water Treatment Plant, GENE; DH – Dunkirk Harbor, CHAU; FMCSP – Four Mile Creek SP, NIAG; FNSP – Fort Niagara SP, NIAG; GHSP – Golden Hill SP, NIAG; INWR – Iroquois NWR, GENE/ORLE; NF – Niagara Falls, NIAG; NPP – Niagara Power Project on Niagara R, Lewiston, NIAG; NR – Niagara R; OOWMA – Oak Orchard WMA, GENE; SPNS – Sinking Ponds Nature Sanctuary, East Aurora, ERIE; Tiftt NP – Tiftt Nature Preserve, Buffalo, ERIE; TWMA – Tonawanda WMA, GENE/NIAG.

### LOONS – DUCKS

**Red-throated Loon:** Buffalo NR 1 Dec (MMo!), uncommon away from L Ontario; max 125 Somerset NIAG 9 Dec (KF); 5 Jan reports (max 8) from L Ontario, likely wintering birds.  
**Com. Loon:** 20 Wilson NIAG 1 Jan (BK), high count for date; 3 other Jan reports.  
**Pied-billed Grebe:** SPNS 22 Dec thru 10 Jan (LH), found dead in road after pond froze; max 8 DH 12 Jan; 2 other Jan reports; Belmont ALLE 16-27 Feb.  
**Horned Grebe:** max 73 Yates ORLE 24 Feb (BK), good winter count.  
**Red-necked Grebe:** NF 14 & 16 Jan (WD, BK); only report.  
**N. GANNET:** Olcott NIAG 3 Dec (BK!); GHSP 27 Jan (RR); 5th and 6th reports on L Ontario.  
**Double-crested Cormorant:** 2 INWR 22 Dec, late for inland; max 189 Dunkirk CBC 1 Jan; 8 NF 15 Jan; Wilson NIAG 5 Jan, 27 Jan, 17 Feb, unusual in winter on

L Ontario.

**Am. Bittern:** Westfield CHAU 3-4 Dec (BS, JG), very late.

**Great Blue Heron:** max 51 Motor I NR 15 Feb (WW).

**Great Egret:** INWR 2, 15 & 27 Dec (WW!, LH, PH); first Dec records for Reg.

**Black-crowned Night Heron:** TWMA 27 Dec (MJW), unexpected winter location; DH 6 Jan (PY); 3 Buffalo ERIE 15 Jan (WD); nearly annual in winter in Buffalo.

**Turkey Vulture:** Elm Valley ALLE 12 Jan (JH!), likely wintering; Dunkirk CHAU 16 Jan (SC); Lancaster ERIE 26 Jan (BRBA); Lewiston NIAG 27 Jan (MMo!), likely early migrants; Fredonia CHAU 2 Feb (JG); 3 Bond L P NIAG 16 Feb (CC); Lockport NIAG 17 Feb (MG); reports of multiples last week in Feb; high number of mid-winter reports.

### GREATER WHITE-FRONTED

**GOOSE:** INWR 24 Feb (DH! BK!), earlier than most reports.

**Snow Goose:** 16 INWR 2 Dec; 5 other Dec reports, more than usual; 50 Pomfret CHAU 17 Feb (TM); 60 S Wales ERIE (TF) 25 Feb; good numbers.

**Brant:** FNSP 1 Jan (KL! JW! et al); rare in winter.

**Mute Swan:** 3 Wilson NIAG 14 Dec; max 6 Dunkirk CBC 1 Jan; INWR 2 Jan; Carlton ORLE 4 Jan; 3 Olcott NIAG 19-20 Jan; Barcelona Harbor CHAU 21-27 Jan; 3 Grand I NR 18 Feb; more winter reports than usual.

**Trumpeter Swan:** 2 Randolph CATT 10 & 17 Feb (MD, TL); 4 BuSP 15 Feb (JS!); all were collared birds from migration project at OOWMA.

**Tundra Swan:** 245 Dunkirk CBC 1 Jan; 228 Upper NR 17 Jan (BB), record high for winter on NR; arr 5 GHSP 16 Feb; 20 INWR 24 Feb.

**Wood Duck:** 5 SPNS 5 Jan (LH), good winter count; Silver Creek ERIE 12 Jan (FR); WTSP 27 Jan (MMo).

**N. Shoveler:** 262, 177 BWWT 2, 22 Dec (WW, BK!), good counts for Dec; 36 Jamestown CBC 16 Dec; DH 8 Jan (TM!), late.

**N. Pintail:** 39 BWWT 18 Dec; SPNS 1 Jan; arr 31 INWR 24 Feb.

**Green-winged Teal:** 4 BWWT 22 Dec (BK); 2 Dunkirk CBC 1 Jan; 2 NF 20 Jan (WD); only reports beyond Dec.

**Ring-necked Duck:** 518, 52 BWWT 2, 22 Dec; max 550 Attica Res WYOM 8 Dec (KF); 40 Buffalo NR 14 Feb (RA); arr INWR 24 Feb.

**Greater Scaup:** 10,000 Hamburg ERIE 13 Jan (BRBA); L Erie typically frozen at this location by mid-Jan.

**Lesser Scaup:** max 386 BeSP 26 Jan (BK); high winter count, but consistent with recent years.

**KING EIDER:** imm m FMCSP 27 Jan (MMo); rarely reported in winter.

**HARLEQUIN DUCK:** Wilson NIAG 5 Dec (BE); ad m Buffalo NR 19-27 Jan (MMo, mob).

**Surf Scoter:** 1, 2 Wilson NIAG 1, 27 Jan;

DH 15 Jan; max 3 FMCSP 27 Jan; only reports.

**Black Scoter:** 2 Somerset NIAG 9 Dec (KF); Buffalo NR 19 Jan (MMo!); only reports.

**Hooded Merganser:** 125 Attica Res WYOM 8 Dec (KF); max 1105 Jamestown CBC 16 Dec, very high count; 22 DH 12 Jan (FR); 32 Tonawanda NR 20 Jan (RA, JT); good counts for winter.

**Ruddy Duck:** max 865 BWWT 2 Dec; 354 BWWT 22 Dec; 2 Buffalo Harbor ERIE 1 Jan; 4 DH 21 Jan.

### HAWKS – ALCIDS

**Bald Eagle:** 2 Attica Res WYOM 8 Dec (KF); FMCSP 9 Dec; Bond L P NIAG 24 Dec; 2 Olean CATT 13 Jan (TL); 2 Salamanca CATT 13 Jan (TL); 3 Allegheny Res CATT 27 Jan (TL); Sheridan CHAU 19 Jan; 2 at nest INWR 19 Jan (S&TO); 2 Strawberry I ERIE 12 Feb; 6 seen from Grand I NR 23 Feb (BB).

**N. Goshawk:** no reports.

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** Celeron CHAU 27 Jan (BK, DH), traditional winter location.

**Rough-legged Hawk:** max 3 Randolph CATT 3 Feb (TL); reported from 7 locations; fewer reports than usual.

**Merlin:** max 5 SUNY Buffalo campus ERIE thru (PY!), new maximum count at this traditional winter roost; Porter NIAG 9 Dec (PY!); E Aurora ERIE 4 Jan (RR).

**Peregrine Falcon:** sev Jan & Feb sightings of Buffalo pair near nesting area.

**Am. Coot:** 1918 Jamestown CBC 16 Dec, very high count; 112 DH 7 Jan.

**SANDHILL CRANE:** 12 Pomfret CHAU 1-21 Jan (JG, mob); 1st winter record and new max.

**Killdeer:** 2 Attica Res WYOM 8 Dec (KF); 2 Jamestown CBC 16 Dec; Amherst ERIE 9 Jan (BK); arr Eden ERIE 9 Feb (DH).

**Greater Yellowlegs:** Dayton CATT 2 Dec (MD), injured.

**Com. Snipe:** Gerry CHAU 19 Jan (BK!), at historical wintering location.  
**POMARINE JAEGER:** Athol Springs ERIE 1 Dec (MT), during strong winds.  
**Parasitic Jaeger:** 3 Athol Springs ERIE 1 Dec (MT), during strong winds.  
**jaeger sp.:** 3 Athol Springs ERIE 1 Dec (MT); 8 Athol Springs ERIE 20 Dec (BRBA); during strong winds.  
**LAUGHING GULL:** ad DH 3 & 6 Jan (WD! BK! mob); rare in any season.  
**Little Gull:** Somerset NIAG 9 Dec (KF); max 4 NR 5 Feb (GB); scattered reports thru NR; DH 7 Feb (DH).  
**BLACK-HEADED GULL:** Devils Hole SP NR 1 & 8 Dec (WD!); NF 7 & 13 Jan (BE, BK!); Buffalo NR 20 Jan (KF); conceivably same bird.  
**Bonaparte's Gull:** 8330 NR 24 Dec (GB); est 50,000 NR 13 Jan (WD); 13,300 NR 25 Jan (GB), remarkable since sp usually in very low numbers by mid Jan; down to 3830 NR 5 Feb (GB).  
**CALIFORNIA GULL:** 2 ad NPP 2 Dec (WD!); single NPP or vicinity until 18 Feb, latest winter date.  
**Iceland Gull:** max 8 NPP 6 Jan.  
**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** max 9 NF & NPP 2 Dec (WD); Buffalo NR 28 Jan.  
**Glaucous Gull:** max 4 NPP 1 Jan (GR); DH 7 Jan; Buffalo ERIE 12 Feb; Wilson NIAG 16 Feb.  
**SABINE'S GULL:** juv DH 1 Dec (JG, DM); juv Buffalo NR 3 Dec (PY), on the late side.  
**Black-legged Kittiwake:** juv Buffalo NR 1 Dec (MMo); juv Buffalo ERIE 2 Jan (WD).  
**Forster's Tern:** Buffalo ERIE 1-2 Jan (GR! MG! BK!), very late but not unprecedented.

#### DOVES – WOODPECKERS

**Snowy Owl:** 2 DH 11-18 Dec; INWR 12 Dec; NF Airport NIAG 29 Dec-26 Jan; max 4 Buffalo ERIE 23 Dec (WD, BP); Porter NIAG 30 Jan.  
**Long-eared Owl:** max 8 Porter NIAG 29

Dec; Somerset NIAG 13 Jan (STO); 4 GHSP 17 Feb (STO).  
**Short-eared Owl:** TWMA 27 Dec; max 5 Porter NIAG 23 Feb (STO).  
**N. Saw-whet Owl:** Amherst ERIE Jan (BRBA), seen taking a mouse; W Almond ALLE 20 Jan (BK, DH).  
**Red-headed Woodpecker:** 3 FNPS 1 Jan (GR); 2 Porter NIAG 11 Feb (MG); only reports.  
**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** Colden ERIE 29 Dec (JW), unusual in winter.

#### FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

**E. PHOEBE:** FMCSP 29 Dec (WD!), extremely rare in winter.  
**N. Shrike:** max 3 Olcott NIAG to Kuckville ORLE 12 Jan (BE); 9 other reports plus 9 on CBCs, fewer than recent winters.  
**Com. Raven:** 2 Attica Res WYOM 8 Dec (KF!); max 6 Alfred ALLE 15 Dec (EB); 3 Wethersfield WYOM 26 Dec (DJ); 2 Arkwright ERIE (BK!); 6 other reports from CATT.  
**N. Rough-winged Swallow:** NF 8 Dec (WD!), very late.  
**Carolina Wren:** reported from 12 locations plus 20 on CBCs; good number of reports.  
**Winter Wren:** Bond L NIAG 23 Dec; Porter NIAG 12 Jan, last reports.  
**Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** Bond L NIAG 2 Dec (PY); Beaver Meadow CBC 15 Dec; Oak Orchard CBC 27 Dec; Porter NIAG 29 Dec (DH), last report.  
**E. Bluebird:** max 52 Hamburg CBC 5 Jan (GR); reported from 10 other locations, plus strong CBC showing.  
**TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE:** Bond L P NIAG 5 Dec thru (DM, WD! NYSARC, mob), first for Region.  
**Hermit Thrush:** FMCSP 1 & 28 Jan; L Erie SP 3 Jan; only reports.  
**Gray Catbird:** Tift NP 13 Dec (BRBA); Porter NIAG 1 Jan (WD); unusual in winter.  
**Am. Pipit:** Elba ORLE 4 Jan (BK!),

unusually late, first Jan record.

**BOHEMIAN WAXWING:** FNSP 1 Jan (WD! BK!); 5 Olcott 7 Jan (BE).

#### WARBLERS

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** 3 BuSP 2 Dec; 6 INWR 18 Dec; 5 L Erie SP 3 Jan; only reports.

**Com. Yellowthroat:** BuSP 2 & 16 Dec (PY), different birds; INWR 22 Dec (BK!); very rarely reported in winter.

#### TANAGERS – WEAVERS

**Chipping Sparrow:** BuSP 2 Dec (PY); Chautauqua CHAU 5 Jan (TM); unusual in winter.

**Fox Sparrow:** Ashville CHAU 23 Feb (MMi!), early.

**Swamp Sparrow:** 12 INWR 22 Dec (BK), good count for winter; 2 SPNS 5 Jan; 2 FMCSP 13 Jan; Almond ALLE 21 Jan; Randolph 17 Feb.

**White-crowned Sparrow:** 5 Wilson CBC 29 Dec; Lewiston NIAG 1 Jan; max 8 Pomfret CHAU 3 Jan; Hamburg CB<sup>C</sup> 5 Jan.

**Dark-eyed “Oregon” Junco (*J. h. oregonus*):** Eden ERIE thru (RA!); same feeder location as last year.

**Lapland Longspur:** max 26 Porter NIAG 29 Dec (MMo); 2 Cambria NIAG 29 Dec; Yates ORLE 4 Jan; Somerset NIAG 19 Jan.

**Snow Bunting:** max 500 Alabama GENE 15 Feb (AK), good count.

**Red-winged Blackbird:** 8 Dec & Jan reports; arr Eden ERIE 14 Feb.

**E. Meadowlark:** 2 Villanova CHAU 16 Jan (RB), unusual in winter.

**Rusty Blackbird:** SPNS 28 Jan (BRBA); 2 Grand I ERIE 1 Feb (BB), at feeder.

**Com. Grackle:** 3 Jan reports; arr Lancaster ERIE 22 Feb.

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** max 39 Tonawanda ERIE 2 Feb.

**Pine Grosbeak:** 8 FMCSP 9 & 21 Dec (PY, STO); Beaver Meadow CBC 15 Dec; 16 Bond L P NIAG 27 Dec-23 Feb (MMo, mob); 8 Somerset NIAG 4 Jan (BK); absent most winters.

**Purple Finch:** only 5 reports, very low numbers.

**Red Crossbill:** Jamestown CHAU 7 Jan (BS); 8 Phillips Cr SF ALLE 20 Jan (BK); only reports.

**White-winged Crossbill:** Franklinville CATT 15 Dec (BK); Elma ERIE 6 Jan (DC); 2 FMCSP 27 Jan (MMo); Almond ALLE 29-31 Jan (SP); few reports after good fall migration.

**Com. Redpoll:** max 128 Beaver Meadow CBC 15 Dec; 75 Fredonia CHAU 25 Dec; 55 Pomfret CHAU 10 Jan; 40 Bond L NIAG 18 Jan; 90 Newfane NIAG 17 Feb; smaller numbers from 12 other locations.

**Pine Siskin:** max 71 Colden ERIE Dec. Jan (JW); 35 Darien GENE Dec (TH); smaller numbers from 15 other locations.

**Evening Grosbeak:** 12 Amity L ALLE 1-24 Dec (VP); 23 Scio CBC 15 Dec; 4 Beaver Meadow CBC 15 Dec; 3 Oak Orchard CBC 27 Dec; 5 Hamburg CBC 5 Jan; 23 AISP 24 Feb (PY); 7 Franklinville CATT 1 Feb; only reports.



## REGION 2 – GENESEE

Kevin C. Griffith

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It was a long, hard winter. Wait a minute, I must have the wrong year. In fact it was the 3rd warmest since they began keeping records and the warmest in 70 years. The snowthrowers and shovels didn't get much of a workout. The frontal movements didn't really bring much in the line of sightings, but there were interesting records anyway. December temperatures averaged 35.9°F, 6.8° above normal. Precipitation was 1.01" below normal at 1.72". Snowfall was a paltry 7.1", with the majority of that falling on the 27th and 28th. January saw an average temperature of 32.6°. That was a whopping 8.7° above normal. Precipitation was just slightly above normal with a total of 2.92", though snowfall was 11.9", well below normal. February's average temperature was 6.6° above normal at 31.9°, while precipitation totaled 1.61", 0.43" below normal. Snowfall was the most for the winter at 18.7", but that too was more than 4" below normal.

The three area Christmas Bird Counts for the most part were favored by the mild weather. The Rochester Count totaled 94 species while the Letchworth and Little Lakes counts reached 74 and 86 species respectively. The annual NYS Waterfowl Count produced 24,793 individuals of 32 species. The species total was above the ten-year average of 29, but the total of individuals was about 3000 below normal.

Dave Tetlow once again embarked on a January quest for species. His total of 144 was a new Regional high. The mild winter certainly helped, but the searching was difficult as birds were not concentrated in specific locations. Numbers of individuals were also low. It does prove though that diligence can pay off.

All in all it proved to be an interesting winter. Loon counts from the lakewatch at Hamlin Beach were generally good. All three expected grebes were reported, but a flyby **Western Grebe** at Hamlin Beach on 5 January was not expected. Northern Gannet in December and January was also a plus. Turkey Vultures were well reported, continuing the recent trend. Waterfowl highlights included a few Snow Goose reports and good numbers of Canada Geese. Unfortunately, the Mute Swan numbers were very good. A high count of Tundra Swans in February was surprising. The typical reports of Trumpeter Swans continued this year. Puddle ducks were about average, while diving duck rafts were down considerably from recent years. Redheads were good throughout the period on Conesus Lake and White-winged Scoter numbers at the lakewatch were also good. King Eiders were reported in December and January. Rarities included an adult male **Common Eider** at Hamlin Beach in December and again in early January. Most sighted here are female or immature.

It was a fairly typical winter for hawks. Accipiters were well reported as usual. Rough-legged Hawk numbers were down this year. Red-shouldered Hawk is rare but regular, and the number of winter Merlin reports continues to be fairly consistent. Ring-necked Pheasant populations were once again quite low, with few



reports of this declining species. The usual rail reports came from Mendon Ponds and the recent trend of Common Moorhen reports from the same area continued. Shorebirds were represented by the standard fare of Killdeer and Common Snipe. Two American Woodcocks in January in Bergen Swamp were a surprise and the 25 February migrant arrival date was very early. The absence of Purple Sandpiper after early December was a surprise. Diligence at the lakewatch paid off with several January jaeger reports, the Parasitics a first for the Region for the month.

It was a less than spectacular winter for gulls in terms of unusual sightings. The traditional concentrations occurred at the Detection Systems ponds in Perinton. Later in the season the bays and ponds along the Lake Ontario shore produced good concentrations, including large numbers of Great Black-backed Gulls. Black-headed Gull and **Thayer's Gull** topped the list of rarities. Lesser Black-backed Gulls continued to be well reported. A January Black-legged Kittiwake was a Regional first for that month.

The winter owl situation continues to be quite interesting. More persistent efforts have turned up some of the less common species in winter. The Little Lakes CBC once again produced Long-eared and Northern Saw-whet, with 12 of the latter reported. Snowy Owls started out strong but faded as the season progressed. Short-eared Owls were in short supply this year.

The January Eastern Phoebe was a good find, but the December **Western Kingbird** located in Hamlin by Dave Tetlow was only the fifth report of this species for the Region. Northern Shrike reports were down. The report of a flock of 16 Common Ravens from the Rattlesnake Hill WMA was an unprecedented number. The typical half-hardy species found included Winter Wren, Marsh Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Gray Catbird, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Common Yellowthroat and Rusty Blackbird, although numbers of individuals seemed off a bit from recent years except in the case of the blackbirds, which produced a record high on the Rochester CBC. Winter American Pipits were unusual. Bohemian Waxwings were scarce with only two January reports and Cedar Waxwings were present in only generally low numbers. Pine Warbler in January was a good find.

The sparrow picture was mixed, with the somewhat typical Chipping, Field and Savannah reports, but also an untypical Eastern Towhee. American Tree Sparrows were low as were Song, Swamp, White-throated and White-crowned sparrows. Lapland Longspur and Snow Bunting numbers were down.

A winter finch year didn't come to fruition as it appeared that the majority of the birds passed on through during the late fall flights. Only scattered individuals were reported during the bulk of the winter season. The exception was Common Redpoll, which was regularly reported, with a somewhat sedentary group of about 75 at Hamlin Beach. Mixed in with this group was a single Hoary Redpoll that could be found with persistent searching.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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## ABBREVIATIONS

BB – Braddock Bay, MONR; B – T of Bergen, GENE; BS – Bergen Swamp, GENE; CL – Conesus L; DE – Durand-Eastman County Park, MONR; G – Greece, MONR; HB – Hamlin Beach SP, MONR; HL – Honeoye L area, LIVI; IB – Irondequoit Bay, MONR; MP – Mendon Ponds County Park, MONR; P – Perinton, MONR; RH – Rattlesnake Hill WMA, LIVI; SP – Sodus Pt, WAYN.

### LOONS – DUCKS

**W. GREBE:** HB 2 Jan (DT).

**N. Gannet:** HB 3 Dec (DT); IB 25 Dec (S&RS); IB 2 Jan (KG); all imm.

**Great Blue Heron:** max 20 Turning Pt P, Rochester 5 Dec.

**Turkey Vulture:** HL 22 Dec; 12 B all Dec; 1-7 B all Jan; Hilton 26 Jan.

**Snow Goose:** 12 HB 4 Dec, 10 white & 2 blue; 2 MP 19 Dec, 1 white & 1 blue; G 18 Jan, blue; MP 25 Jan.

**Brant:** Pt Breeze, ORLE 1-2 Jan; 3 SP ? Jan.

**Trumpeter Swan:** 2 IB all Jan, wing tags 459 & 460; Bear Creek, WAYN all Jan, wing tag 501.

**Tundra Swan:** arr 23 Brockport 14 Feb; max 155 G 26 Feb.

**Wood Duck:** arr Bushnell's Basin 26 Feb.

**Gadwall:** max 110 IB all Jan.

**Green-winged Teal:** arr 3 HB 25 Feb.

**Redhead:** max 7000 CL 13 Jan.

**Greater Scaup:** max 6500 HB 24 Feb.

**King Eider:** HB 4 Dec (WS,CC); HB 8

Dec (WS,DS); both imm/fem; fem HB 4 Jan (WS,DT); 6 HB 14 Jan (WS,DT), 5 fem & 1 m; 2 fem HB 20 Jan (WS,DT); fem HB 22 Jan (WS); fem HB 27 Jan (WS).

**COM. EIDER:** ad m HB 8 Dec (WS,DS); ad m HB 9 Jan (DT), highly likely the same individual.

**White-winged Scoter:** max 1700 HB 20 Jan.

### HAWKS – ALCIDS

**N. Goshawk:** HB 4 Dec; Hilton 6 Dec; RH 19 Jan.

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** RH 25 Jan (DT).

**Merlin:** IB 25 Dec; Ogden 17 Jan; IB 20 Jan.

**Virginia Rail:** 2 G 16 Dec; MP 25 Jan.

**Sora:** MP 1 Jan.

**Com. Moorhen:** MP 27 Jan (DT,MD).

**Killdeer:** 5 BB 16 Dec; arr BB 25 Feb.

**Purple Sandpiper:** 2 SP 1 Dec.

**Com. Snipe:** CL 12 Jan (DT,MD).

**Am. Woodcock:** 2 BS 26 Jan (D&KT);

arr Manitou 25 Feb.

**Pomarine Jaeger:** HB 16 Jan (DT).

**Parasitic Jaeger:** HB 2 Jan (DT); HB 3 Jan (RS,WS,DT); 1st Jan Reg records.

**Jaeger species:** HB 20 Jan (WS).

**Black-headed Gull:** ad HB 16 Jan (DT).

**Bonaparte's Gull:** max 600 DE 13 Jan.

**Ring-billed Gull:** 15,480 CL, Little Lakes CBC 22 Dec, CBC record high.

**THAYER'S GULL:** ad IB 16 Jan (DT); ad P 15 Feb (C&RM).

**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** ad P 27 Dec (DS); ad IB 20 Jan (DT,MD); ad P 26 Jan (DT,MD); 2 ad G 10 Feb (KG); 2 ad P 15 Feb (C&RM).

**Iceland Gull:** P 27 Dec.

**Black-legged Kittiwake:** 3 HB 2 Dec (DT,WS,CC); imm HB 20 Jan (DT).

#### DOVES – WOODPECKERS

**Barred Owl:** 8 HL 22 Dec (DV).

**Long-eared Owl:** 3 BS 8 Jan (DT); arr Manitou 25 Feb.

**N. Saw-whet Owl:** 12 HL 22 Dec (DV); BS 8 & 27 Jan (D&KT).

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** CL 12 Jan.

**Pileated Woodpecker:** max 12 RH 24 Jan.

#### FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

**E. Phoebe:** Pultneyville 13 Jan (DT,MD).

**W. KINGBIRD:** Hamlin 8 Dec (DT); 5th

Regional, 1st winter record.

**Com. Raven:** HB 2 Jan; 16 RH 19 Jan (DT,MD), flock leaving roost area.

**Marsh Wren:** 3 G 16 Dec; G 15 Jan.

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** Canadice 22 Dec; CL 12 Jan.

**Am. Pipit:** 2 HB 2 Dec; 3 Elba 3 Jan; Byron 4 Jan; G 26 Feb.

**Bohemian Waxwing:** 7 DE 10 Jan (RS); 6 Parma 17 Jan (DT).

#### WARBLERS

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** DE 11 Jan.

**Pine Warbler:** H 23 Jan (DT).

#### TANAGERS – WEAVERS

**E. Towhee:** HB 5 Jan.

**Field Sparrow:** CL 12 Jan.

**Savannah Sparrow:** Byron 8 Jan.

**Red-winged Blackbird:** arr 2 Mt Morris LIVI 5 Feb.

**Rusty Blackbird:** 87 BB 16 Dec (DB), record high Rochester CBC; 12 BB 2 Jan.

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** max 750 Honeoye Falls 26 Jan.

**Red Crossbill:** HB 5 Jan.

**Hoary Redpoll:** HB off and on Dec (DT,DS); HB 2 & 6 Jan (KG,DT,MD).

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## REGION 3 – FINGER LAKES

**Bill Ostrander**

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Winter 2001-2002 was relatively warm and dry. Average temperatures in Ithaca were 35.4°F in December, 31.0° in January and 31.4° in February. Those temperatures made December the second warmest on record, January the seventh warmest and February the second warmest. The coldest temperature of the entire season was 8° on 1 January. Total precipitation for the season was about 80% of normal in Ithaca, but was less than 50% normal in Elmira. Snow was scarce. December had only three days with one-inch accumulations on the ground. The biggest snowstorm of the season came on 7 January when 4" fell. Another 2" fell on 8 January, which brought the snow depth to 5". The snow depth was reduced to trace amounts by 11 January. February had two 2" snowfalls and only one other with as much as 1" of accumulation.

The warm, relatively snowless winter, following on the heels of a likewise warm fall, allowed several species to linger that would not normally be found in the Region after the first of December. This factor, combined with a decent winter finch invasion and a couple of very lost pelagics made the winter very exciting indeed for the Region's birders.

Most of the Common Loons that were lingering late, probably on Lake Ontario, took advantage of the passing cold front on 7 December to pass southward over the Taughannock Falls State Park Loon Watch. A December record high of 553 was recorded there that day. The Eared Grebe returned to Aurora Bay for the third year in a row and fourth time in five years.

Any heron, other than Great Blue, is a winter rarity in the Region. Birders found individuals of two species this winter. An American Bittern was recorded on the Montezuma CBC. John and Delores Ennis spotted a Great Egret flying low, but southward, over the Mill Street Pond area in Horseheads. Joan Ostrander saw perhaps the same bird flying over the Susquehanna River in Tioga County (Region 4) the following day. In spite of the warmer weather, Great Blue Herons did not seem to linger in any greater numbers than usual.

Geese and swans were all recorded in high numbers for the season, though different species peaked at different times of the winter. A relatively large number of Snow Geese were still present at Montezuma NWR in early December. Among them, several observers found four Greater White-fronted Geese. The Eaton Bird Club noted 400 Brant on its Christmas Bird Count, 19 December. The New York State Waterfowl Count found the high number for Canada Geese in the Cayuga Lake Basin on 19 January. In Elmira, Christmas Bird counters noted many Canada Geese migrating high overhead on 1 January. That was the third consecutive day to experience single-digit overnight temperatures and the resulting freezing must have been sufficient to push many geese southward. The overall number of Canada

Geese reported in the Region increased for the third consecutive winter. The warm February brought back the high number of 1200 Tundra Swans to Montezuma NWR on 25 February.

Most duck species were recorded in lower numbers this winter, especially diving ducks. There were, however, several sightings of all three scoter species, even though winter sightings of Surf and Black are normally rare in the Region. It is possible that the warm winter allowed more ducks to remain at more northern latitudes. Mallard and Lesser Scaup numbers decreased for the second year in a row.

The high counts of Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk and Rough-legged Hawk on the Ithaca CBC, as well as for many other species, can probably be attributed to the 21% increase in party-hours by the count's participants. In spite of these high counts, numbers for Red-tail and Rough-leg were actually down overall in the Region. This is also true for many other species for which single site or CBC highs were recorded. Steve and Susan Fast made the unusual observation of seeing 15 Northern Harriers coming off a communal roost in Ledyard at dawn.

Pete Hosner and Matt Williams discovered a late Common Moorhen on 16 December at Montezuma NWR. Observations of **Sandhill Cranes** have been increasing steadily over the last decade. Winter observations, however, are rare, and John Van Neil's sighting of 18 flying over his property on 15 December is exceptional.

The Greater Yellowlegs at Montezuma NWR on 2 December was unusual, but the **Lesser Yellowlegs** discovered on the Montezuma CBC on New Year's Day was astounding. Three Killdeer and a Dunlin were present at Myers Point for much of January and were joined for a couple of weeks by an American Pipit. Perhaps the same Dunlin appeared at Stewart Park on 7 February.

Former Regional Editor, Steve Kelling, found the two most exciting birds of the season. On 17 December, he discovered a tiny alcid in the middle of Cayuga Lake, near the south end. He was sure that it was a murrelet, and thought that it was probably a **Long-billed Murrelet**. Jay and Kevin McGowan missed finding the bird on their first attempt, but returned later in the day to discover it in the middle of the lake. Much to their surprise, the bird slowly swam toward where they were standing and finally was swimming just a few feet offshore, where it posed for some fine digiscoped photos, which will certainly confirm the bird as New York State's second record of this species. The bird lingered on the lake for three days for observation by mobs of birders. This led to yet another exciting find. An immature **Northern Gannet** winged its way past the murrelet watchers on each of the last two days of the murrelet's presence. Unfortunately, neither bird made a showing for the numerous weekend birders.

The Kellings, Jeff Wells and the McGowans traveled in vain to Sullivan County in Region 9 in hopes of finding the **Slaty-backed Gull** reported there. They speculated that the bird might show up in the large gull concentration at the Seneca Meadows Landfill. This speculation proved to be correct. Steve located the bird, or perhaps another individual, the following day at the landfill.



Bird Club, Karen Edelstein, Steve Eicker, Jesse Ellis, Delores & John Ennis, Bill Evans, Jennifer Fais, Steve & Susan Fast, Annette Finney, Bob Fogg, Kurt Fox, Tom Fredericks, Tim Gallagher, Gracie & Gwyneth & Jeff & Whitney Gerbracht, Aaron Greene, John Greenly, John & Sue Gregoire, Bob Guthrie, Jane Hahn, the Halls, Meena Haribal, Wes Hochachka, Asher & Jane Hockett, Anna & Austin & Jeff Holbrook, George & Jo Houghton, Pete Hosner, Bill Howard, Larry Hymes, Tony Ingraham, Ithaca College Ornithology Class, Carolyn Jacobs, Anne Marie & Tim Johnson, Sam & Steve & Taylor Kelling, Graham Kerslick, Elizabeth King, Geo Kloppel, Jon & Rachel Kloppel, Ely & Julie & Kaila Koski, Paul Larrabee, Leona Lauster, Dan Lebbin, Tim Lenz, Jeff Lewis, Irby Lovette, Ellen Luce, Bob Maguire, Bill & Shirley McAneny, Jay & Kevin & Perry McGowan, Bob McGuire, Marie McRae, Bob Meade, Matt Medler, Teresa Melvin, Melissa Moore, Dave Neveu, Dave Nutter Family, Jim Ochterski, David Olmstead, Bill & Joan Ostrander, Mary Passage, Gerard Phillips, Mike Powers, Bard Prentiss, Bill Purcell, Laurie Ray, Marilyn Ray, Marie Read, Mark Reaves, Michelle Reidy, Ken Rosenberg, Dave Russell, Matt Sarver, Marty Schlabach, the Schmidts, Mickey Scilingo, Tim Setter, Sandy Sharp, Anne Marie Sheridan, Dominic Sherony, Linda Silber, Julie Siler, Carol & Joe Slattery, Ken Smith, Laura Stenzler, Tim Stetter, Matt Stillerman, Dave Streater, Carl & Kathy Strickland, Sarah Striffler, SUNY ESF, Scott Sutcliffe, James Taylor, Steve Taylor, Regi Teasley, Chris & Diane Tessaglia-Hymes, Julian & Mary Jane Thomas, Robin Tuttle, John Van Niel, Matt Victoria, Betty Walker, Dave Warner, Dan Watkins, Gil Weakland, Watt Webb, Allison & Jeff Wells, Matt Williams, Caissa Willmer, Sandy Wold, Colleen Wolpert, Carl & June Wood, Jill & Richard Wood, Matt Young.

## ABBREVIATIONS

Caro – Caroline; CCBC – Corning CBC 15 Dec; CLB – Cayuga Lake Basin; CLSP – Cayuga L SP; ECBC – Elmira CBC 1 Jan; ESSC – East Shore Sailing Club TOMP; GCBC – Geneva CBC 5 Jan; ICBC – Ithaca CBC 1 Jan; KH – Kestrel Haven Avian Migration Observatory; MCBC – Montezuma CBC 1 Jan; MNWR – Montezuma NWR; MyPt – Myers Pt CAYU; SaMu – Savannah Mucklands SENE; SML – Seneca Meadows Landfill SENE; StP – Stewart P TOMP; TFSP – Taughannock Falls SP; WCBC – Watkins Glen CBC 29 Dec.

### LOONS – DUCKS

**Red-throated Loon:** max 2 TFSP 2 Dec; last StP 19 Dec.

**Com. Loon:** max 553 TFSP 8 Dec (CaBC,BMe), high; +.

**Pied-billed Grebe:** max 16 WCBC (JBr, JGrg), high; 12 CLB 19 Jan.

**Red-necked Grebe:** MyPt 23 Feb (CaBC,MH); only report.

**EARED GREBE:** Aurora Bay CAYU 22

Dec (J&KMc) thru.

**N. GANNET:** ESSC 19-20 Dec (GD,PH,DL,MME,CT).

**AM. BITTERN:** MCBC (EBC); only report.

**GREAT EGRET:** last Horseheads 5 Dec (D&JEn), late; only report.

**Turkey Vulture:** max 8 Cascadilla Gorge TOMP 25 Feb (SB), high; +.

**GREATER WHITE-FRONTED**

There were a few short population trends, or perhaps trends in birder reporting, to be noted. Regionwide, the number of Ring-billed Gulls was up for the second consecutive year. Both Rock and Mourning doves were down for the second straight year, as were Lapland Longspurs and Brown-headed Cowbirds. European Starlings were up for the third year in a row.

The warm winter produced several lingering passerines. The Ithaca CBC turned up a Hermit Thrush and a Gray Catbird. Another Hermit Thrush was in Caroline 9 January. Dave Russell thought that he had found an Orange-crowned Warbler at Park Station, always an exciting find in Chemung County. When he obtained a better look at the bird, it turned out to be a Tennessee Warbler, not so exciting, but extraordinary on the late date of 2 December. Half a dozen Yellow-rumped Warblers overwintered in Ledyard. The Montezuma CBC turned up an Eastern Towhee. John and Sue Gregoire had a Chipping Sparrow through early December. The Ithaca CBC had a high count of 12 Swamp Sparrows and the Geneva CBC had a high count of 10 Field Sparrows. White-crowned Sparrows were present at a few feeders across the Region.

Blackbirds returned quite early. Though not the first migrants reported, the huge flock of Red-winged Blackbirds flying through Hornellsville on 19 February was unusual for such an early date.

The appearance of Pine Grosbeaks in the Region was the highlight of a decent winter finch invasion. White-winged Crossbills were much more evident than Red Crossbills. Common Redpolls were present in sizable flocks at several locations. Steve Kelling recorded and photographed the season's only **Hoary Redpoll**. Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks also visited many feeders.

The following species listing includes comparisons of observed bird populations in the region between winter 2001-2002 and winter 2000-2001. A "+" at the end of the species account indicates an increase; a "-" indicates a decrease. Accounts with neither symbol indicate that the species did not demonstrate a significant change in reported numbers. Unless otherwise noted, the cited comparisons showed statistically significant changes ( $\chi^2 > 3.84$ ;  $P = 0.05$ ). A discussion of my methodology and its limitations can be found in the Region 3 report that appeared in the December 1999 issue of *The Kingbird*.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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**GOOSE:** MNWR 2 Dec (BG,JHa,CJ,LL); SaMu 15-16 Dec (BH); max 4 Montezuma Wetlands Complex SENE 23-24 Feb (mob), high; MNWR 25 Feb (JE,DL).  
**Snow Goose:** max 4725 MNWR 2 Dec (BG,JHa,CJ,LL), high; +.  
**Canada Goose:** max 52,341 CLB 19 Jan (BBOD), high; +.  
**BRANT:** ESSC 19-25 Dec (AB,PH, mob); ICBC (CaBC); max & last 400 GCBC (EBC), high & late; +.  
**Mute Swan:** max 2 Clute Memorial P SCHU 12 Jan; -.  
**Tundra Swan:** max 1200 MNWR 25 Feb (PH), high; +.  
**Wood Duck:** max 12 MCBC (EBC), high; 2 Big Flats Bird Sanctuary CHEM 1 Dec.  
**Gadwall:** max 150 CLB 19 Jan (CaBC), high; -.  
**Am. Wigeon:** max 44 CLB 19 Jan; -.  
**Am. Black Duck:** 2052 CLB 19 Jan; -.  
**Mallard:** max 5087 CLB 19 Jan; -.  
**N. Shoveler:** max & last 51 MNWR 22 Dec; +.  
**N. Pintail:** max 23 SaMu 2 Dec; -.  
**Canvasback:** max 1242 CLB 19 Jan; -  
**Redhead:** max 5574 CLB 19 Jan; -.  
**Ring-necked Duck:** max 181 CLB 19 Jan (CaBC), high; -.  
**Greater Scaup:** max 100 Springport 14 Jan; -.  
**Lesser Scaup:** max 150 Hog Hole TOMP 12 Jan; -.  
**SURF SCOTER:** max 4 StP 3 Dec (StK), high; ESSC 16 Dec-19 Jan (JBa); +.  
**White-winged Scoter:** max 7 TFSP 2 Dec (JE), high; +.  
**BLACK SCOTER:** ESSC 16 Dec (JBa); max 2 ESSC 18 Dec (Kfo,Jeh,MV), high; StP 24 Dec (BBOD).  
**Long-tailed Duck:** max 20 ESSC 18 Dec (PH), high; +.  
**Bufflehead:** max 101 CLB 19 Jan; -.  
**Com. Goldeneye:** max 665 CLB 19 Jan; -.  
**Hooded Merganser:** max 13 StP 8 Dec; -.  
**Com. Merganser:** max 227 MCBC; 22 West Elmira Riverine Forest CHEM 26 Jan; -.

## **HAWKS – ALCIDS**

**Bald Eagle:** 7 MNWR 2 Dec; max 10 MCBC (EBC), high.  
**N. Harrier:** max 33 ICBC (CaBC), high; 15 Ledyard 21 Jan; +.  
**Red-tailed Hawk:** max 124 ICBC (CaBC), high; 22 Ithaca Game Farm TOMP 26 Dec; -.  
**Rough-legged Hawk:** max 17 ICBC; 5 Caro 17 Feb; -.  
**Peregrine Falcon:** max 2 SaMu 2 Dec (BG,JHa,CJ,LL), high.  
**Wild Turkey:** max 214 ICBC (CaBC), high; 80 Caro 1 Jan; -.  
**COM. MOORHEN:** MNWR 16 Dec (PH,MW); only report.  
**Am. Coot:** max 509 CLB 19 Jan; -.  
**SANDHILL CRANE:** 18 Seneca Falls 15 Dec (JVN);, only report; +.  
**Killdeer:** max 3 MyPt 11 Jan-5 Feb; arr Cornell U TOMP 26 Feb.  
**GREATER YELLOWLEGS:** last MNWR 2 Dec (BG,JHa,CJ,LL), late; only report.  
**LESSER YELLOWLEGS:** last MCBC 1 Jan (EBC,BPu!), late; only report.  
**DUNLIN:** MyPt 5-28 Jan (St&TK,TL,J&KM); StP 7 Feb (JBa).  
**Com. Snipe:** Dryden 6 Feb (BPr); only report.  
**Am. Woodcock:** Hector 26 Feb (ND); only report.  
**Bonaparte's Gull:** max 19 StP 28 Dec (BBOD), high; +.  
**Ring-billed Gull:** max 5000 CLSP 30 Dec (BBOD), high; +.  
**Herring Gull:** max 3500 CLSP 30 Dec (BBOD), high; +.  
**Iceland Gull:** max 6 SML 23 Feb; +.  
**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** max 4 SML 25 Feb.  
**SLATY-BACKED GULL:** SML 23 Feb (StK! J&KM, ph, mob), 1st Reg report.  
**Glaucous Gull:** max 2 Seneca Landfill ONTA 19 Jan.  
**Great Black-backed Gull:** max 137 MCBC (EBC), high; 85 Seneca Landfill ONTA 19 Jan; +.

**LONG-BILLED MURRELET:** StP 17-20 Dec (St&TK!J&KMc, ph, mob), Reg 1st.

#### **DOVES – WOODPECKERS**

**Rock Dove:** max 1916 ICBC (CaBC), high; 570 Dryden 5 Jan; -.

**Mourning Dove:** max 625 ICBC; 90 Dryden 20 Jan; -.

**Great Horned Owl:** max 11 ICBC; 4 17 Jan; -.

**Snowy Owl:** max 2 SaMu 2 Dec.

**Long-eared Owl:** Danby 16 Jan (BBOD); only report.

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** Ithaca 12 Jan (BBOD); only report.

**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** max 110 ICBC (CaBC), high; 11 Caro 1 Jan.

**Downy Woodpecker:** max 315 ICBC; 19 Caro 1 Jan; -.

**Hairy Woodpecker:** max 109 ICBC (CaBC), high; 5 Sapsucker Woods TOMP 14 Feb.

#### **FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS**

**N. Shrike:** max 3 ICBC; Veteran 2 Jan; -.

**Blue Jay:** max 538 ICBC; 24 Newfield 19 Feb; -.

**Am. Crow:** max 30,000 5 Jan; +.

**Com. Raven:** max 15 CCBC (CV,AS), high; 5 Dryden 26 Jan.

**Horned Lark:** max 400 Genoa 6 Jan; -.

**Black-capped Chickadee:** max 2490 ICBC (CaBC), high; 93 Caro 1 Jan; -.

**Tufted Titmouse:** 20 Newtown Battlefield Reservation CHEM 8 Dec; max 367 ICBC (CaBC), high.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** max 94 ICBC (CaBC), high; 8 Dryden 24 Jan.

**Carolina Wren:** max 20 ICBC (CaBC), high; 6 Caro 1 Jan.

**Golden-crowned Kinglet:** 14 Spencer Crest Nature Center STEU 8 Dec; max 93 ICBC (CaBC), high; -.

**E. Bluebird:** max 98 ICBC; 15 Ithaca 12 Jan; -.

**Hermit Thrush:** ICBC; Caro 9 Jan.

**Am. Robin:** max 698 ICBC; Springport 27 Jan; -.

**GRAY CATBIRD:** ICBC (CaBC).

**N. Mockingbird:** max 16 ECBC; 3

Ledyard 16 Dec; -.

**European Starling:** 3000 KH 1 Dec; max 15,863 ICBC (CaBC), high; +.

**AM. PIPIT:** MyPt 20 Jan-5 Feb (JGm,A&TJ); Veteran 23 Jan (AG); Veteran 16 Feb (B&JO).

**BOHEMIAN WAXWING:** Dryden 21-24 Jan (mob, ph).

**Cedar Waxwing:** max 788 ICBC (CaBC), high; 500 Ithaca 22 Feb; +.

#### **WARBLERS**

**TENNESSEE WARBLER:** last Park Station CHEM 2 Dec (DR), very late.

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** max 6 Ledyard 22 Jan; -.

#### **TANAGERS – WEAVERS**

**E. TOWHEE:** MCBC (EBC); only report; -.

**Am. Tree Sparrow:** max 456 ICBC; 53 Caro 1 Jan; -.

**CHIPPING SPARROW:** last KH 5-7 Dec (J&SGrg), late.

**Field Sparrow:** 10 GCBC (EBC), high; only report.

**Fox Sparrow:** arr Caro 23 Feb (StK).

**Song Sparrow:** 2 MNWR 2 Dec; max 35 ICBC; -.

**Swamp Sparrow:** max 12 ICBC (CaBC), high; Hog Hole TOMP 12 Jan.

**White-throated Sparrow:** max 77 ICBC; 14 West Elmira Riverine Forest CHEM 19 Feb; -.

**Dark-eyed Junco:** max 587 ICBC; 45 Caro 1 Jan; -.

**Lapland Longspur:** max 5 MCBC; 2 Dryden 22 Dec; -.

**Snow Bunting:** max 300 Dryden 20 Jan; -  
**N. Cardinal:** max 430 ICBC; 25 Caro 1 Jan; -.

**Red-winged Blackbird:** arr 3 Romulus 11 Feb (J&MT); max 1200 Hornellsville 19 Feb (TM), high; +.

**Com. Grackle:** arr 30 Westside Ave Elmira 13 Feb (BO), early; max 200

Romulus 26 Feb; +.

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** max 62 ICBC;  
arr 25 Newtown Creek CHEM 24 Feb; -.

**PINE GROSBEEK:** 2 Summerhill State  
Forest CAYU 1 Dec

(MSa,MY,SUNYESF); max 41 ICBC  
(CaBC), high; 4 Dryden 20 Jan-26 Feb  
(BBOD,KR); +.

**Purple Finch:** max 10 Dryden 24 Jan; -.

**House Finch:** 56 Caro 4 Dec; max 620  
ICBC; +.

**Red Crossbill:** Ithaca 1 Dec.

**White-winged Crossbill:** max 35 Dryden  
15 Feb (BBOD), high; +.

**Com. Redpoll:** max 300 CCBC (CVAS),  
high; 300 KH 17 Feb; +.

**HOARY REDPOLL:** Caro 8 Feb (StK,  
ph); only report.

**Pine Siskin:** max 33 Caro 1 Feb (BBOD),  
high; +.

**Am. Goldfinch:** max 490 ICBC (CaBC),  
high; 56 17 Jan; -.

**Evening Grosbeak:** max 118 ICBC; 101  
Summerhill State Forest CAYU 14 Feb; +.

**House Sparrow:** max 2442 CCBC, high;  
200 Canandaigua 15 Jan; +.

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## REGION 4 – SUSQUEHANNA

**Tom Salo**

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The warmth of fall continued through the winter season. Cold fronts were few and, when they arrived, the cooler weather did not persist. As reported at Binghamton, December's mean temperature of 33.5°F was 7° higher than normal. January was 8.4° above normal. February was 6.5° above normal. Binghamton received slightly less than normal precipitation. Most of the Region was without significant snow cover throughout the period. Some "lake effect" snow did accumulate, starting in late December on higher elevations in the northern part of the Region. This snow covered a relatively small area in some of the coldest areas and had melted by mid-February.

The warm season, resultant open water and lack of snow kept birds that otherwise would have moved south or concentrated in a few areas spread throughout the Region. Great Blue Heron, Belted Kingfisher and other birds associated with open water remained in areas where they are normally absent. Pied-billed and Horned grebes were seen, as they have been most recent winters. Such reports used to be rare. In light of historical records, the amount of open water at Otsego Lake was exceptional. Three Mute Swans, discovered there in January 2001, have been present for over a year and have raised concerns they may nest. Seventeen species of ducks were reported. Rarities included a Black Scoter found on 1 December at the Whitney Point Reservoir by Bob Grosek and a Gadwall recorded on the 23 December Cortland Christmas Bird Count.

Bald Eagle numbers were very high. Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch co-chair



Andrew Mason wrote: "The 19 Bald Eagles counted at the Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch in December and January added to a new seasonal high record at the site." Bald Eagles of various ages were regularly reported near open water in the eastern part of the Region. Adults were present at established nest sites in Deposit and Delancy during late winter. Adult and immature birds were regular at Otsego Lake and Oneonta. The congregation of eagles at Cannonsville Reservoir, where water levels were exceptionally low, was substantial. Thirteen immature and four adult birds were seen near the dam on 2 February by participants on a Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society trip. On 23 February at the dam, a lone coyote approached several eagles sitting on the ice. Apparently, the wild dog associates the birds with food. In an example of cooperative hunting, two adult eagles were observed in close pursuit of a single Snow Goose in Middlefield on 13 January by Patricia Thorpe and Gary Barnum.

Large numbers of our other eagle were also seen. Franklin Mountain's 43 Golden Eagles in December contributed to a new seasonal record at the site. The high came on 9 December when 28 Golden and two Bald eagles were recorded by Kay Crane, Fred Fries and Steve Hall in just over three hours. This count tied the site's one day record for Golden Eagle set one month earlier on 9 November. Away from Franklin Mountain, 11 widespread reports were received. The species was missed in Broome and Tioga counties and elsewhere from 6 January to 25 February.

Winter reports of Peregrine Falcons are usually rare. Julian Shepard noted the single bird he found on the Broome Christmas Bird Count spent the winter in downtown Binghamton. It may be one of the pair that has successfully nested in the city. A second Peregrine was seen by members of the Linnaean Society in the City of Cortland on 10 February.

As would be expected with the warmth and lack of snow, half-hardy species were found well spread across the Region. Some were present in areas and at elevations that are unprecedented. Eastern Bluebirds are expected in the warmer areas. They were there and also near Oneonta and Norwich, where they stayed at elevations up to 1600'. While a few American Robins are typical in the winter, the flock of 160 that resided in Cherry Valley all winter is certainly unusual. Dorian Huneke's sighting of a Northern Mockingbird in Treadwell on 16 December stands out as a rare winter report from Delaware County. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Chipping and Field sparrows are often missed, but this winter each was seen.

Finch reports were mixed. Small flocks of Pine Grosbeaks were found where food was available. Once the food source was depleted, the birds moved on. Purple Finches mostly vacated the Region in December, with the last report on 2 January. A few reports of single White-winged Crossbills and small groups of Pine Siskins were received. Common Redpolls and Evening Grosbeaks were regular visitors at area feeders.

Most regular species were well represented but Barred Owl was missed completely. Horned Lark numbers were low and reports were isolated.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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## ABBREVIATIONS

BCBC – Broome CBC; ChCBC – Chenango CBC; CoCBC – Cortland CBC; DOAS – Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society; FMHW – Franklin Mt Hawk Watch; FWC – Federation Waterfowl Count; OCBC – Oneonta CBC; OtsL – Otsego L; TBC – Tioga Bird Club.

### LOONS – DUCKS

**Com. Loon:** max 3 OtsL 3 Feb; scattered reports.

**Pied-billed Grebe:** max 2 Boland Pd BROO 16 Dec; OtsL FWC 13 Jan; other Dec reports; more regular in recent winters.

**Horned Grebe:** OtsL 19 Dec; never common; seen most recent winters.

**Double-crested Cormorant:** ChCBC 15 Dec; Vestal 19 Feb (MP); rare in winter.

**Great Blue Heron:** max 8 Murphy's Sand Pit, Vestal 27 Dec; widespread, scattered reports thru.

**Turkey Vulture:** arr Bainbridge 26 Feb; Vestal 27 Feb.

**Snow Goose:** max 300 FMHW 9 Dec; last Edmeston 5 Feb.

**Canada Goose:** max 3069 BCBC 30 Dec.

**Mute Swan:** max 3 BCBC 30 Dec; 3 OtsL thru; regular in BROO.

**Tundra Swan:** 3 TIOG 30 Dec, rare in winter.

**Wood Duck:** max 5 BCBC 30 Dec; some other reports.

**Gadwall:** CoCBC 23 Dec, first winter

report since 1996.

**Am. Wigeon:** 2 Binghamton 28 Feb (GK, HM), unusual.

**Green-winged Teal:** ChCBC 15 Dec; Boland Pd BROO 26 Dec (MP); frequently missed.

**Am. Black Duck:** max 86 BCBC 30 Dec.

**Mallard:** max 1235 BCBC 30 Dec.

**N. Pintail:** ChCBC 15 Dec; 6 BCBC 30 Dec; max 22 Bolands Marsh BROO 28 Feb (GK, HM); missed some years.

**Canvasback:** 13 OCBC 15 Dec; only report.

**Redhead:** arr OtsL 3 Feb; regular visitor, always small numbers.

**Ringed-neck Duck:** ChCBC 15 Dec.

**Lesser Scaup:** OTSE FWC 13 Jan, unusual.

**Black Scoter:** Whitney Pt Res 1 Dec (BG), rare.

**Bufflehead:** max 15 CoCBC 23 Dec; never common.

**Com. Goldeneye:** max 14 CoCBC 23 Dec; 10 Susquehanna Ri BROO 6 Feb (MP); some other reports.

**Hooded Merganser:** max 6 BCBC 30

Dec.

**Com. Merganser:** max 60 both OCBC 15 Dec and BCBC 30 Dec.

**Red-breasted Merganser:** 2 CoCBC Skaneateles L 23 Dec; never common.

#### HAWKS – ALCIDS

**Bald Eagle:** max 24 DELA 20 Jan TBC trip; many reports; intro.

**N. Harrier:** max 2 Homer 1 Dec; 2 Owego 11 Jan.

**Sharp-shinned Hawk:** max 3 BCBC 30 Dec; regular at feeders.

**Cooper's Hawk:** max 6 BCBC 30 Dec; regular at feeders.

**N. Goshawk:** widespread reports of singles; several at feeders; made pass at cat at bird feeder 2 days TIOG (C&JB).

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** DELA 20 Jan TBC trip; 5 early season reports; good winter count.

**Red-tailed Hawk:** 74 FMHW 1 Dec-1 Jan; albino Walton 1-18 Dec (KC, LD).

**Rough-legged Hawk:** max 10 CoCBC 23 Dec; uneven distribution; feeding on carrion West Burlington Jan.

**Golden Eagle:** 43 FMHW Dec; 28 FMHW 9 Dec; intro.

**Am. Kestrel:** widespread thru; present where usually absent.

**Peregrine Falcon:** Cortland 10 Feb Linnaean Society trip; downtown Binghamton thru; rare; intro.

**Ruffed Grouse:** max 7 BCBC 30 Dec.

**Wild Turkey:** max 200 New Lisbon 10 Jan.

**Am. Coot:** max 76 OtsL thru.

**Ring-billed Gull:** max 343 BCBC 30 Dec; 300 Cannonsville Res Dec.

**Herring Gull:** max 54 BCBC 30 Dec.

**Great Black-backed Gull:** max 7 BCBC 30 Dec.

#### DOVES – WOODPECKERS

**Rock Dove:** max 1015 BCBC 30 Dec.

**Mourning Dove:** max 377 BCBC 30 Dec.

**E. Screech-Owl:** max 2 CoCBC 23 Dec; TIOG Feb, residing in nest box (CW).

**Great Horned Owl:** max 3 BCBC 30 Dec; Homer 18 Feb incubating eggs (MY).

**Barred Owl:** missed.

**Short-eared Owl:** max 6 TIOG 30 Dec; regular TIOG Dec & Jan; regular Arnold Rd Lisle Feb.

**Belted Kingfisher:** max 6 BCBC 30 Dec; scattered reports thru.

**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** max 2 BCBC 30 Dec; Springfield 26 Jan (BD), unusual location; regular where expected.

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** CoCBC East Homer 23 Dec, missed some winters.

**Downy Woodpecker:** max 90 BCBC 30 Dec.

**Hairy Woodpecker:** max 26 OCBC 15 Dec.

**N. Flicker:** max 5 BCBC 30 Dec; several other reports.

**Pileated Woodpecker:** max 3 BCBC 30 Dec.

#### FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

**N. Shrike:** 7 reports of singles; last TIOG 27 Jan.

**Blue Jay:** max 213 BCBC 30 Dec.

**Am. Crow:** max 833 OCBC 15 Dec.

**Fish Crow:** max 2 BCBC 30 Dec.

**Com. Raven:** max 18 CHEN late season; regular TIOG; many reports.

**Horned Lark:** ChCBC 15 Dec; max 55 CoCBC 23 Dec; TIOG Feb "unusual for this area" (CB); low numbers.

**Black-capped Chickadee:** max 662 BCBC 30 Dec.

**Tufted Titmouse:** max 177 BCBC 30 Dec.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** max 24 OCBC 15 Dec.

**White-breasted Nuthatch:** max 118 BCBC 30 Dec.

**Brown Creeper:** max 16 BCBC 30 Dec.

**Carolina Wren:** OCBC 15 Dec; 2 CoCBC 23 Dec; max 12 BCBC 30 Dec; at BROO feeders Jan & Feb.

**Golden-crowned Kinglet:** max 13 BCBC 30 Dec.

**E. Bluebird:** max 13 BCBC 30 Dec;  
TIOG, BROO, Oneonta & Norwich thru;  
intro.  
**Am. Robin:** max 200 Cherry Valley 23  
Feb; 160 there thru; unusual location, high  
number.  
**N. Mockingbird:** Treadwell DELA 16  
Dec (DH), unusual location; max 3 BCBC  
30 Dec.  
**European Starling:** max 3732 BCBC 30  
Dec.  
**Bohemian Waxwing:** max 10 TIOG 30  
Dec; 4 reports; some with Cedar  
Waxwings.  
**Cedar Waxwing:** max 418 BCBC 30  
Dec.

#### WARBLERS

None reported.

#### TANAGERS – WEAVERS

**Am. Tree Sparrow:** max 71 BCBC 30  
Dec.  
**Chipping Sparrow:** 2 BCBC 30 Dec;  
only report; often missed.  
**Field Sparrow:** ChCBC 15 Dec; only  
report; often missed.  
**Song Sparrow:** max 9 BCBC 30 Dec.  
**White-throated Sparrow:** max 23 BCBC  
30 Dec; missed from 30 Dec to 6 Feb.

**Dark-eyed Junco:** max 240 BCBC 30  
Dec.  
**Snow Bunting:** ChCBC 15 Dec; 5  
CoCBC 23 Dec; max 100 Maine 19 Jan  
(JT); Plymouth thru.  
**N. Cardinal:** max 93 BCBC 30 Dec.  
**Red-winged Blackbird:** missed Jan; arr  
Treadwell 2 Feb; widespread after 10 Feb.  
**Rusty Blackbird:** FMHW early Dec (FF),  
unusual.  
**Com. Grackle:** max 51 CoCBC 23 Dec;  
widespread after late Feb.  
**Pine Grosbeak:** max 12 CORT 24 Dec; 7  
other reports.  
**Purple Finch:** max 13 TCBC 30 Dec; last  
Gilbertsville 2 Jan.  
**House Finch:** max 253 OCBC 15 Dec.  
**White-winged Crossbill:** ChCBC 15  
Dec; Binghamton Dec; CORT Jan.  
**Com. Redpoll:** max 71 CoCBC 23 Dec;  
widespread thru.  
**Pine Siskin:** max 6 Vestal 14 Dec (MP);  
scattered reports.  
**Am. Goldfinch:** max 146 BCBC 30 Dec;  
numbers dropped during mid-season.  
**Evening Grosbeak:** max 93 OCBC 15  
Dec; widespread.

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## REGION 5 – ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

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The winter of 2001-2002 was the warmest on record at Syracuse, with an average temperature of 34°F, 0.7° above the previous high. At higher elevations there was snow cover through most of the season but at lower elevations there was often less than 6" on the ground, with frequent bare areas. At Syracuse the snowfall total was a scant 41" for the season and there was rarely more than an inch or two on the ground. Adirondack lakes were open until late December. Oneida Lake didn't freeze until the last few days of January and part of it reopened by the end of the season. Otisco Lake never froze completely and Delta Lake froze on 1 January.

December's average temperature was 36.8°, 8.5° above normal and the warmest ever. There was 2.19" of precipitation for the month, 1.01" below normal. The average January temperature was 10.2° above normal at 32.9° and the season continued dry with 2.13" of precipitation, 0.47" below normal. February had an average temperature of 32.3°, 7.8° above normal, and 1.44" of precipitation, which was 0.68" below normal.

A Region 5 birder expects to see Great Blue Heron in the winter, but this season there was a record late **Cattle Egret**, seen by many, and a New Year's Day American Bittern. Waterfowl were later than usual in leaving the Region. The Syracuse CBC on 15 December had 29 Common Loons on Onondaga Lake and the following day the Oswego-Fulton CBC had record numbers of Ring-necked Ducks and Hooded Mergansers, more typical of early November than the middle of December. Snow Geese were seen in large numbers to the end of December and Tundra Swans may have wintered. A handful of American Wigeon did spend the winter and a Blue-winged Teal was found. Waterfowl lingered in southern Madison County into early January due to the late freeze-up. There were large numbers of White-winged Scoters and Long-tailed Ducks through the season in the relatively shallow waters of Lake Ontario's Mexico Bay; they were thought to be feeding on zebra mussels. Uncommon waterfowl included Greater White-fronted Goose, Brant, Trumpeter Swan, Harlequin Duck and Barrow's Goldeneye.

Two Osprey at the mouth of the Salmon River in late December were a first winter record. Bald Eagle was frequently seen along the major rivers and open lakes and a Golden Eagle was attracted to a deer carcass in Muller Hill State Forest, along with a record count of 18 Common Ravens. Northern Harriers were abundant – 27 on the Oneida CBC alone – and were present through the season. There were many reports of the three accipiters, including two at once when a Northern Goshawk caught and plucked an unwary Sharp-shinned Hawk in New Haven. One Red-shouldered Hawk was reported. Rough-legged Hawks seemed to be concentrated in southern Herkimer County. Hawks were moving past Derby Hill by 22 February.

Three winter shorebird species were more than in most years. Only one Killdeer



was reported in December, but they were flying past Derby Hill by 22 February. A Dunlin in early January was the second report for that month and an American Woodcock on 1 December was the second for that month. While visiting from New Jersey, Richard Crossley found a Black-headed Gull in Oswego Harbor. The species is much less common on eastern Lake Ontario than to the west. Bonaparte's Gulls were present through the season; the last February report was in 1958. In what appears to be a regular pattern, Herring and other large gulls peaked along the Oswego River in late January and most departed by 10 February. The gull mix seemed to be constantly changing as shown by three adult Iceland Gulls with different wing patterns seen at Phoenix on separate days over a five-day span. Other unusual reports were of two Pomarine Jaegers in January with the passage of a strong cold front, two Lesser Black-backed Gulls on the Oswego River and a Black-legged Kittiwake in December.

There were the usual reports of Eastern Screech-Owls and Great Horned Owls, especially on CBCs, but the fall Snowy Owl invasion was over quickly as only two birds were seen early in the season. The Short-eared Owl roost in Verona grew to 14. There was a single Long-eared Owl and two Northern Saw-whets as well. Northern Shrike was not an easy bird to find, with few reports of individuals persisting at one location.

The summer drought of 2001 reduced available food so that many song birds did leave the Region regardless of the mild weather. Both Gary Lee and Tom Salo said that few birds remained in northern Herkimer County. Matt Perry walked into the woods on the Clinton CBC expecting to find half-hardies everywhere but found none. An area full of crabapples in New Hartford did attract a large concentration American Robins, Cedar and Bohemian waxwings and Pine Grosbeaks in February. Bohemian Waxwings were otherwise present but on the move.

Matt Young tirelessly covered areas of southern Madison and Onondaga counties, finding up to 100 Pine Grosbeaks and 250 Evening Grosbeaks per day in December. The Pine Grosbeaks were most numerous in Tioughnioga WMA in southern Madison County where they took advantage of abundant crabapple and larch. White-winged Crossbills were present through the season, mostly as small flocks searching for food after the poor cone crop in 2001. There was no evidence of any breeding activity. There were only a few Red Crossbills reported, while Pine Siskins moved out in early December, with only a handful seen at feeders afterwards. Common Redpolls staged a large invasion and, as is usually the case, a few Hoary Redpolls were reported as well.

There was a good variety of half-hardy species including: Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Winter Wren, Hermit Thrush, Gray Catbird, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Eastern Towhee and Rusty Blackbird, but they were few in number. Chipping and Field sparrows also put in brief appearances at feeders in the DeRuyter area. The warm weather encouraged the first few American Robins, Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles to push into the southern edge of the Region in mid-February.

The season's total was 139 species, possibly the highest winter total ever for the

Region. Highlights included American Bittern, Cattle Egret, Harlequin Duck, Barrow's Goldeneye, Osprey, Golden Eagle, Dunlin, American Woodcock, Pomarine Jaeger, Black-headed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake and the legion of half-hardies.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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## ABBREVIATIONS

Adks – Adirondacks; Bvll – Baldwinsville; CM – Clay Marsh; DH – Derby Hill; FH – Fair Haven, Little Sodus Bay and vicinity; GSC – Great Swamp Conservancy, n. MADI; HIWMA – Howland I WMA; LOL – L Ontario Littoral; OneiL – Oneida L; OnonL – Onondaga L; SFWS – Spring Farm Wildlife Sanctuary, Kirkland; SSSP – Selkirk Shores SP; SVB – Sylvan and Verona Beach; Syr – Syracuse; TRWMA – Three Rivers WMA.

### LOONS – DUCKS

**Red-throated Loon:** DH 1 Dec; 2 OnonL 19 Dec; Skaneateles 5-30 Jan; last Oswego 5 Feb.

**Com. Loon:** 12 Labrador Pd 12 Dec, unusual; max 29 OnonL 15 Dec; last Old Forge 27 Dec, very late.

**Pied-billed Grebe:** up to 4 per day Oswego Ri/OnonL thru.

**Horned Grebe:** max 44 LOL 27 Jan, high for late Jan.

**Red-necked Grebe:** FH 13 Jan; only report.

**Double-crested Cormorant:** max 50 Oswego 22 Dec and up to 40 per day there thru.

**Am. Bittern:** HIWMA 1 Jan (SB! BG!), 4th winter record.

**Great Blue Heron:** 1-2 per day where found; scarce for an open winter.

**CATTLE EGRET:** Skaneateles to 19 Dec.

**Turkey Vulture:** max 6 Dewitt 6 Dec, with reports thru; arr DH 26 Feb.

### GREATER WHITE-FRONTED

**GOOSE:** Cazenovia L 2 Jan (KM, MY); FH 4 Jan (KM, BP).

**Snow Goose:** 1500 over Old Forge 15 Dec; max 2000 Canastota 19 Dec; 1200 Sauquoit 28 Dec; 3 Munsville 16 Jan; arr Port Byron 16 Feb; first flock Tully 21 Feb.

**Snow Goose, blue phase:** 5 DeRuyter 7 Dec; Sherrill 19 Jan; Manlius 20 Jan.

**Canada Goose:** to 5000 per day FH thru; 10,000 OneiL 27 Jan; 2000 Old Forge 15 Dec, late for numbers in Adks.

**Brant:** Fulton to 22 Dec; SVB to 27 Dec.

**Mute Swan:** SVB 29 Dec; 2 Woodman Pd thru; max 7 FH 18 Feb.

**TRUMPETER SWAN:** 5 FH 18 Feb (BP, NYSARC).

**Tundra Swan:** imm Hookway Tract Syr 8 Dec, unusual site; max 15 OneiL 13 Jan; 13 LOL 6 Feb.

**Wood Duck:** max 4 Fulton 16 Dec; scattered Jan singles.

**Gadwall:** max 41 OnonL 12 Jan.

**Am. Wigeon:** max 22 LOL 13 Jan; 5-6 FH thru; wintering birds unusual.  
**Am. Black Duck:** max 102 OneiL 13 Jan.  
**Mallard:** max 1374 Oswego Ri 16 Feb.  
**Blue-winged Teal:** Oswego 16 Jan (GP!), 9th winter record.  
**N. Pintail:** FH 27 Jan.  
**Green-winged Teal:** max 9 GSC 11 Dec; 4 Hookway Tract Syr thru.  
**Canvasback:** max 9 FH 19 Feb.  
**Redhead:** max 90 LOL 13 Jan; 50 per day OneiL to 20 Jan.  
**Ring-necked Duck:** max 150 Fulton 16 Dec; 33 Fulton 27 Feb, early migrants.  
**Greater Scaup:** max 300 LOL 20 Jan; low numbers.  
**Lesser Scaup:** max 30 FH 22 Dec.  
**Harlequin Duck:** LOL 3 Feb (GS).  
**Surf Scoter:** 2 LOL 20 Jan.  
**White-winged Scoter:** max 300 LOL in Mexico Bay 13 Jan; 150+ there thru.  
**Black Scoter:** 9 DH 1 Dec; imm OnonL 15 Dec; male OnonL 12-20 Jan; 3 LOL 13 Jan.  
**Long-tailed Duck:** 800-1000 per day LOL Jan-Feb, mostly Mexico Bay.  
**Bufflehead:** max 70 Oswego 22 Dec.  
**Com. Goldeneye:** max 1100 LOL 18 Feb.  
**Barrow's Goldeneye:** LOL 5 Feb (KM); FH 18 Feb thru (BP).  
**Hooded Merganser:** max 118 Fulton 16 Dec; 37 Old Forge 15 Dec, late in Adks.  
**Com. Merganser:** 34 Old Forge 15 Dec, late in Adks; max 1800 OneiL 29 Dec; 1720 Oswego Ri 15 Feb.  
**Red-breasted Merganser:** max 140 Oswego 22 Dec.  
**Ruddy Duck:** max 20 Minoa 15 Dec; last OneiL 14 Jan.

#### HAWKS – ALCIDS

**OSPREY:** 2 SSSP 28-29 Dec (Don Coogan, NYSARC), 1st winter record.  
**Bald Eagle:** 2 per day OneiL until late Jan freeze-up; present OnonL, Oswego Ri, Mohawk Ri, LOL thru; 2 ad & 2 juv Big Moose L 28 Dec; pair in courtship Salmon Ri 5 Feb.

**N. Harrier:** max 27 Oneida CBC 29 Dec; 30+ reports thru; 4 DH 25 Feb, first migrants.  
**Sharp-shinned Hawk:** about 25 reports.  
**Cooper's Hawk:** about 28 reports; 4 migrants DH 25 Feb.  
**N. Goshawk:** Muller Hill SF thru; Clinton 15 Dec; TRWMA 23 Dec; 2 Tioughnioga WMA 5 Jan; West Monroe 27 Jan; Georgetown 29 Dec; New Haven 9 Feb, plucking a Sharp-shinned Hawk; DH 25 Feb.  
**Red-shouldered Hawk:** Verona 7 Feb; only report.  
**Red-tailed Hawk:** max 29 CM 15 Dec; albino Elbridge 5 Jan, present since 1996.  
**Rough-legged Hawk:** max 7 Fairfield 23 Dec, only area with large concentration; 4 SVB 29 Dec; 3 DeRuyter 20 Feb; 13 DH 25 Feb; 8 DH 26 Feb, migrants.  
**Golden Eagle:** Muller Hill SF 15 Feb (MY).  
**Am. Kestrel:** max 4 Sterling 22 Dec; widespread wintering.  
**Merlin:** reports indicate only a single bird roosting Onondaga P Syr thru; Oneida 3 Jan.  
**Wild Turkey:** 75 Ira 13 Dec; max 200 DeRuyter 30 Dec; 100 Fabius 26 Jan.  
**Am. Coot:** max 3 DeRuyter 7 Dec; 2 FH 4 Jan; scarce.  
**Killdeer:** Pompey 24 Dec; arr DH 22 Feb.  
**Dunlin:** Lewis Pt OneiL 2 Jan (BB!), 2nd Jan record.  
**Am. Woodcock:** Hamilton 1 Dec (Brian White), 2nd Dec record.  
**Pomarine Jaeger:** 2 DH 13 Jan (KM), 2nd Jan record.  
**BLACK-HEADED GULL:** Oswego 17 Dec (Richard Crossley!), 9th record.  
**Bonaparte's Gull:** max 72 OneiL 30 Dec; 5 DH 13 Jan; 2-4 LOL thru Feb, very unusual.  
**Ring-billed Gull:** max 6000 SVB 30 Dec.  
**Herring Gull:** max 4200 Oswego Ri 2 Feb.  
**Iceland Gull:** SVB 23 Dec; 3 ad Oswego Ri 15-25 Jan, unusual; 1-2 per day

Oswego Ri Jan-Feb.

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL:** 2 Phoenix 6 Feb (GP).

**Glaucous Gull:** arr Oswego, DH 2 Dec; SVB 29 Dec; mostly 1 per day Oswego Ri thru.

**Great Black-backed Gull:** max 400 SVB 30 Dec.

**Black-legged Kittiwake:** imm DH 1 Dec.

#### DOVES – WOODPECKERS

**E. Screech-Owl:** Fulton 16 Dec; SVB 29 Dec; 6 Skaneateles 5 Jan; 2 Camillus 5 Jan; Whiskey Hollow 13 Jan.

**Great Horned Owl:** 2 DeRuyter 6 Dec; 7 Old Forge 15 Dec; CM 1 Jan; 2 Camillus 5 Jan; 5 Skaneateles 5 Jan.

**Snowy Owl:** Oswego 3 Dec; Bville 9 Dec; only reports.

**Barred Owl:** Oneida 15 Dec; Clinton 15 Dec; HIWMA 19 Jan; SVB 28 Jan. **Long-eared Owl:** Liverpool 8 Jan; only report **Short-eared Owl:** max 14 SVB 1 Jan; Fairfield 23 Dec, only other location.

**N. Saw-whet Owl:** Highland Forest 13 Dec; T Onondaga 21 Feb.

**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** Boonville 2 Dec, last reported there in 1999, at edge of range.

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** DeRuyter to 7 Dec; HIWMA 19 Jan.

**Black-backed Woodpecker:** 2 Old Forge 27 Jan (BC, KM).

**N. Flicker:** max 11 HIWMA 19 Jan; 3 Sterling 18 Feb.

#### FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

**N. Shrike:** singles DeRuyter, Georgetown, 2 Mexico regular thru; only 4 others reported including 1 Camillus in same place 3 winters running.

**Am. Crow:** 12,993 Syracuse CBC; 10,249 Clinton CBC; urban roosts continue to increase.

**Fish Crow:** 2-3 OnonL, 2 Shop City Syr; Syr U area thru.

**Com. Raven:** max 18 Muller Hill SF 15 Feb, at deer carcass; numerous reports

from Adks; courtship noted Georgetown 23 Jan; 2 SVB 29 Dec and 1 East Syr 24 Feb, at unusual sites.

**Horned Lark:** max 300 Marcellus 6 Jan; scarce in Feb with little snow cover; singing several locations late Feb.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** scarce early but showed up at feeders in Jan.

**Carolina Wren:** Syr thru; Oneida 9 Jan.

**Winter Wren:** Syr 15 Dec; SFWS 4 Feb.

**Golden-crowned Kinglet:** 3-4 per day many areas on CBCs.

**E. Bluebird:** max 11 TRWMA 28 Jan; singing Tully 9 Feb.

**Hermit Thrush:** 2 Oswego 16 Dec; CM 13 Feb.

**Am. Robin:** 100 SFWS thru; 60 Sterling 18 Feb; 200 New Hartford 25 Feb, likely return migrants.

**Gray Catbird:** Oneida 29 Dec (BB).

**N. Mockingbird:** singles most sites: 3-4 NYS Fairgrounds thru.

**European Starling:** 900 Albion 9 Dec, reflects lack of snow southern Tug Hill.

**Bohemian Waxwing:** 12 Tioughnioga WMA 29-30 Dec; 10 Clinton 10 Feb; 28 Pulaski 15 Feb; 100 SFWS 18, 26 Feb; max 160 New Hartford 26 Feb.

**Cedar Waxwing:** max 200 New Hartford 26 Feb.

#### WARBLERS

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** East Syr 22 Dec; only report, surprising for a mild winter.

#### TANAGERS – WEAVERS

**E. Towhee:** Oriskany 15 Dec (C. Sassman, fide MP).

**Am. Tree Sparrow:** max 44 Camillus 5 Jan.

**Chipping Sparrow:** New Woodstock 30 Dec (MY).

**FIELD SPARROW:** DeRuyter 21 Jan (MY).

**Swamp Sparrow:** singles Syr and Clinton CBCs 15 Dec; SFWS 14 Dec, 19 Jan.

**White-throated Sparrow:** max 14 Dewitt

6 Jan.

**Dark-eyed Junco:** max 24 Camillus 5 Jan.

**Lapland Longspur:** Fabius 23 Dec; max 3 Skaneateles 5 Jan; New Woodstock 20 Jan.

**Snow Bunting:** max 300 Marcellus 6 Jan; last 100+ count Tully 26 Jan.

**Red-winged Blackbird:** winter max 75 Fabius 24 Dec; 21 Port Byron 10 Feb; 8 DeRuyter 10 Feb; early migrants with larger flocks by 21 Feb.

**Rusty Blackbird:** SFWS 5 Feb; Victory 23 Feb.

**Com. Grackle:** North Syr 1 Jan; arr 2 DeRuyter 10 Feb; max 74 North Syr 26 Feb.

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** max 150 Fabius 23 Dec; 15 DeRuyter to 15 Jan; 42 Brookfield 21 Feb.

**Pine Grosbeak:** max 70 Tioughnioga WMA 5 Jan; small numbers Adks; 60 New Hartford 15 Feb, where many lingered thru.

**Purple Finch:** max 4 Tioughnioga WMA 5 Jan; only a few other reports of 1-2 per

sighting.

**House Finch:** up to 15 per day Muller Hill SF, unusual at 1800'.

**Red Crossbill:** 5 Clinton 15 Dec; 4 Parish 22 Dec; 2 Rome 30 Dec; only reports.

**White-winged Crossbill:** max 26 Mexico 10 Feb; to 16 per day DH feeders 18 Feb thru; 1-5 per day S MADI & ONON thru; pair Bvile after 20 Jan, unlikely location.

**Com. Redpoll:** max 500 Highland Forest 5 Jan; 300 Verona 10 Jan; flocks of 50-120 common many locations.

**Hoary Redpoll:** Oriskany 15 Dec (fide MP); DeRuyter 18 Jan (MY!); Muller Hill SF 15 Feb (MY!).

**Pine Siskin:** max 25 Highland Forest 22 Dec, 25 Feb; 15 DeRuyter 1 Dec, with 2 per day thru; small numbers Adks departed early Dec.

**Evening Grosbeak:** 150-200 DeRuyter thru; 12 Boonville 2 Dec; 31 Brookfield 29 Dec; at feeders Adks, Tug Hill.

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## REGION 6 – ST. LAWRENCE

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The winter season of 2001–2002 began with temperatures in the 20°Fs and a snow cover over the entire Region. Temperatures remained 4–7° lower than the norm throughout December. Continuous snow cover, with an additional 10–18", created problems for grassland feeders, causing many species to depart early. January temperatures were average in St. Lawrence and slightly warmer in Jefferson and Lewis counties. Snowfall for the month was 18", adding to the existing 6–8" already present in the lowlands. The Adirondacks and Tug Hill accumulated a total of 4–6' over the three month period. A cold front, preceded by a warm push of temperatures in the 60°s and wind gusts as high as 60–70 mph, hit the area on 10 February. Thereafter, winter conditions continued for the rest of the period. The St. Lawrence River, however, was open in several locations throughout the season,



allowing several species of ducks to remain.

Rarities included **Harlequin Duck** and **Barrow's Goldeneye**.

Bald Eagle numbers were again at an all time high, with a total of 56 and reports from all three counties. The main source of food continues to be White-tailed Deer. Eight Northern Goshawk reports were above average. Rough-legged Hawk numbers returned to normal for the season, probably due to the recovery of voles on Point Peninsula. The appearance of an immature Golden Eagle on the Massena CBC, reported by Bruce DiLabio, was unusual for the season.

Positives for the period were good numbers of Northern Shrikes, with 18 reports, 22 reports of Common Ravens away from the Adirondacks and large flocks of Cedar Waxwings and Snow Buntings. Both House and Purple finches were in good numbers and a massive invasion of White-winged Crossbills and Pine Siskins began to develop at the end of the period.

Negatives included fewer numbers of American Black Ducks and Mallards due to snow cover and lower numbers of Red-tailed Hawks in Jefferson County. There were no reports of Bonaparte's Gull, Eastern Bluebird or Bohemian Waxwing and there were low numbers of Common Redpolls and Evening Grosbeaks.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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## ABBREVIATIONS

Cl – Collins Landing SLR at the Thousand Islands bridge T Orleans JEFF; CV – T Cape Vincent JEFF; Fl – Fisher's Landing T Orleans JEFF; KC – Kelsey Creek T Watertown JEFF; MCBC – Massena CBC STLA 23 Dec; NBCBC – New Boston CBC LEWI 28 Dec; PIPt – Pillar Pt T Hounsfield JEFF; PRWMA – Perch Ri WMA T Orleans JEFF; PtPen – Pt Peninsula T Lyme JEFF; RMPD – Robert Moses Power Dam T Massena; SLR – St. Lawrence Ri; TICBC – Thousand Islands CBC T Alexandria T Orleans T Clayton JEFF 30 Dec; TLou – T Louisville STLA; TMor – T Morristown STLA; WCBC – Watertown CBC JEFF 16 Dec; WB – Wilson Bay CV; WBM – Wilson Bay Marsh CV JEFF; WHWMA – Wilson Hill WMA TLou STLA; WI – Wellesley I T Orleans JEFF.

### LOONS – DUCKS

**Great Blue Heron:** 4 WCBC 16 Dec; 2 TLou in open water to 30 Dec.  
**Snow Goose:** 25 flying along SLR CV 9 Jan; blue morph with flock of Canadas

over CV 17 Jan.

**Canada Goose:** max 2942 WCBC 16 Dec; 40 over CV 17 Jan; last 12 Adams JEFF 22 Jan.

**Mute Swan:** 6 Dexter Marsh T

Hounsfield JEFF 4 Dec.

**Tundra Swan:** 11 PtPen 15 Dec; 10 SLR CV 21 Dec; max 17 WCBC 16 Dec; last 2 WB on the ice 20 Feb.

**Wood Duck:** KC 14 Jan.

**Gadwall:** 3 TICBC 30 Dec; 5 MCBC 23 Dec.

**Am. Black Duck:** 200 WHWMA 14 Dec; 88 WCBC 16 Dec; 27 TICBC 30 Dec; 35 FWC 17 Jan; last 2 Adams JEFF 22 Jan.

**Mallard:** plentiful throughout until heavy snows in late Dec; 39 WCBC 16 Dec; 2000-2500 with small numbers of Am. Black Duck and N. Pintail T Watertown Jeff 29 Dec; 9 FWC 14 Jan.

**N. Pintail:** FL 6 Feb.

**Canvasback:** 4 PiPt 4 Dec; 12 WB 10 Dec; Fl 6 Feb.

**Redhead:** 20 WB 20 Dec; 60 SLR TMor & T Oswegatchie STLA 11 Feb, in 10 mile survey.

**Ring-necked Duck:** 5 WCBC 16 Dec.

**Greater Scaup:** 1500 PiPt 4 Dec; 10 WCBC 16 Dec.

**Lesser Scaup:** 10 MCBC 23 Dec.

**HARLEQUIN DUCK:** ad m Fl 12 Jan-6 Feb (NL).

**Bufflehead:** 30 SLR CV 10 Dec; 15 WCBC 16 Dec.

**Com. Goldeneye:** 402 WCBC 16 Dec; 272 TICBC 30 Dec; max 1347 SLR TMor 16-19 Feb.

**BARROW'S GOLDENEYE:** ad m Blackstone Bay TMor 30 Jan.

**Hooded Merganser:** 10 SLR TLou 11 Dec; 10 TICBC 30 Dec; 10 Fl 13 Jan; last 4 RMPD 18 Feb.

**Com. Merganser:** 93 TICBC 30 Dec; 501 WCBC 16 Dec; 208 CV 13 Jan.

**Red-breasted Merganser:** 2 CV 14 Jan; max 35 SLR TMor & T Oswegatchie 11 Feb, in 10 mile survey.

#### HAWKS – ALCIDS

**Bald Eagle:** 30 ad & 11 imm TICBC 30 Dec; ad & imm MCBC 23 Dec; 4 TMor 11 Feb; 2 T Parishville STLA 19 Jan; 6 Sevey's Corners T Colton STLA 10-13

Jan; 2 T Lorraine LEWI 10 Jan.

**N. Harrier:** m PRWMA 13 Dec; fem PRWMA 28 Jan; TICBC 30 Dec.

**Sharp-shinned Hawk:** max 4 WCBC 16 Dec; NBCBC 28 Dec; 2 T Massena; 3 singles JEFF.

**Cooper's Hawk:** WCBC 16 Dec; MCBC 23 Dec; TICBC 30 Dec; 3 other reports scattered throughout.

**N. Goshawk:** WCBC 16 Dec; KC 20 Dec; 3 NBCBC 28 Dec.; 2 TICBC 30 Dec; CV 28 Jan.

**Red-tailed Hawk:** 57 WCBC 16 Dec; 6 NBCBC 28 Dec; 34 TICBC 30 Dec; numbers down 50% on CBCs, perhaps due to snow cover prior to 1 Dec.

**Rough-legged Hawk:** 47 WCBC 16 Dec; 3 MCBC 23 Dec; 9 NBCBC 28 Dec; 7 TICBC 30 Dec; numbers back to average after poor count last year.

**Golden Eagle:** imm MCBC 23 Dec (BD).

**Am. Kestrel:** 3 WCBC 16 Dec; 2 TICBC 30 Dec; 3 CV 1 Jan.

**Merlin:** T Watertown JEFF 16 Dec- 10 Jan; Ogdensburg STLA 13 Jan.

**Gray Partridge:** 24 in 4 coveys CV.

**Ring-necked Pheasant:** 6 WCBC 16 Dec; 2 m CV 31 Jan.

**Ruffed Grouse:** 3 MCBC 23 Dec; 3 NBCBC 28 Dec; 32 TICBC 30 Dec.

**Wild Turkey:** 91 MCBC 23 Dec; 194 NBCBC 28 Dec; 90 TICBC 30 Dec.

**Ring-billed Gull:** 14 WCBC 16 Dec; 5 MCBC 28 Dec; 28 TICBC 30 Dec; low numbers.

**Herring Gull:** 22 WCBC 16 Dec; 12 MCBC 23 Dec; 17 NBCBC 28 Dec.

**Great Black-backed Gull:** 9 WCBC 16 Dec; 14 MCBC 23 Dec; 4 TICBC 30 Dec.

#### DOVES – WOODPECKERS

**Rock Dove:** max 936 WCBC 16 Dec.

**Mourning Dove:** 393 WCBC 16 Dec; 253 MCBC 23 Dec; 25 NBCBC 28 Dec.

**E. Screech Owl:** WHWMA 4 Feb.

**Great Horned Owl:** MCBC 23 Dec; 2 NBCBC 28 Dec; 4 TICBC 30 Dec; 3 prs south village CV early Jan.

**Snowy Owl:** 4 JEFF; TICBC 30 Dec; 2 STLA, all imm.

**Barred Owl:** 2 MCBC 23 Dec; NBCBC 28 Dec; TICBC 30 Dec; 1 catching a Hairy Woodpecker T Potsdam 8 Feb; 2 TLou 15 Feb.

**Short-eared Owl:** 2 WCBC 16 Dec.

**Belted Kingfisher:** 2 WCBC 16 Dec, 1 thru 23 Feb; TICBC 30 Dec.

**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** 5 WCBC 16 Dec.

**N. Flicker:** TLou 4 Jan.

#### FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

**N. Shrike:** 2 Redwood JEFF thru Dec; 4 WCBC 16 Dec; TLou 20 Dec; 5 MCBC 23 Dec; 5 NBCBC 28 Dec; 4 TICBC 30 Dec; 2 Ogdensburg STLA 13 Jan; 3 T Canton STLA 28 Jan; 2 RMPD 18 Feb; a very good year.

**Com. Raven:** 2 WCBC 16 Dec; 2 MCBC 23 Dec; 9 NBCBC 28 Dec; 9 TICBC 30 Dec; 12 on deer carcass near Sevey's Corners T Colton STLA.

**Horned Lark:** 120 WCBC 16 Dec; 3 NBCBC 28 Dec; 210 TICBC 30 Dec.

**Tufted Titmouse:** MCBC 23 Dec; TLou 2 Jan.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** 3 MCBC 23 Dec; 33 NBCBC 28 Dec; max 34 TICBC 30 Dec; 2-3 TLou & T Massena thru.

**Brown Creeper:** 4 WCBC 16 Dec; 2 MCBC 23 Dec; NBCBC 28 Dec; 2 CV thru.

**Golden-crowned Kinglet:** 3 MCBC 23 Dec; 8 NBCBC 28 Dec; 10 TICBC 30 Dec.

**Am. Robin:** 101 WCBC 16 Dec; 10 MCBC 23 Dec; 64 TICBC 30 Dec.

**N. Mockingbird:** MCBC 23 Dec; T LeRay JEFF 25 Jan.

**European Starling:** 6278 WCBC 16 Dec; 327 NBCBC 28 Dec.

**Cedar Waxwing:** 118 WCBC 16 Dec; 91 NBCBC 28 Dec; 201 TICBC 30 Dec; 50 RMPD 27 Jan.

#### TANAGERS – WEAVERS

**Am. Tree Sparrow:** 157 WCBC 16 Dec; 59 MCBC 23 Dec; 40 NBCBC 28 Dec; 314 TICBC 30 Dec.

**Song Sparrow:** 3 WCBC 16 Dec; 6 TICBC 30 Dec; 1 KC thru.

**White-throated Sparrow:** 5 WCBC 16 Dec; 2 TICBC 30 Dec; 6 KC thru.

**Dark-eyed Junco:** 46 WCBC 16 Dec; 18 MCBC 23 Dec; 20 NBCBC 28 Dec; 149 TICBC 30 Dec; at several feeders thru.

**Lapland Longspur:** 7 River Rd CV 10 Dec; 14 CV 1 Jan.

**Snow Bunting:** 262 WCBC 16 Dec; 131 MCBC 23 Dec; 182 TICBC 30 Dec; max 500-600 CV 17 Jan.

**N. Cardinal:** 28 WCBC 16 Dec; 66 MCBC 23 Dec; 6 TICBC 30 Dec.

**Red-winged Blackbird:** TICBC 30 Dec.

**E. Meadowlark:** WCBC 16 Dec.

**Rusty Blackbird:** T Lorraine LEWI 8-13 Dec at feeder (DL).

**Com. Grackle:** WCBC 16 Dec; 6 TLou 26 Dec; 3 TICBC 30 Dec.

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** 2 WCBC 16 Dec; 2 MCBC 23 Dec; 5 NBCBC 28 Dec; 4 TICBC 30 Dec.

**Purple Finch:** 28 MCBC 23 Dec; 22 NBCBC 28 Dec; 18 TICBC 30 Dec.

**House Finch:** 119 WCBC 16 Dec; 30 T Massena 20 Dec; 81 MCBC 23 Dec; 8 NBCBC 28 Dec; 207 TICBC 30 Dec.

**White-winged Crossbill:** 2 NBCBC 28 Dec; 4 PtPen 12 Feb; large flocks T Greig LEWI 24 Feb & T Colton, T Fine, T Piercefield STLA 15 Feb thru.

**Com. Redpoll:** 20 WCBC 16 Dec; 10 TICBC 30 Dec; 16 T Massena 27 Jan.

**Pine Siskin:** large flocks Adirondacks & Tug Hill with White-winged Crossbills after 15 Feb.

**Am. Goldfinch:** 102 WCBC 16 Dec; 107 MCBC 23 Dec; 208 TICBC 30 Dec; large flocks throughout.

**Evening Grosbeak:** 2 WCBC 16 Dec; 5 NBCBC 28 Dec.

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## REGION 7 - ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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Drought conditions extended throughout the winter, and temperatures were unseasonably mild. December saw only isolated, minor snowfalls, with 3" at Plattsburgh on the 18th typical. The gradual accumulation is illustrated by depths on the Christmas Bird Counts: 0-4" on Ferrisburg 15 December, "some" at Plattsburgh and 2" at Minerva 16 December, 2-10" at Elizabethtown 22 December and 10-12" at Saranac Lake by 30 December. Lake Champlain was still low (93.88') on the 20th. Saranac Lake dropped to -10°F on 8 January, but a thaw followed, with Plattsburgh 42° by 10 January and 39° the following day. By mid-month, temperatures were 8.4° above normal. On 21 January, Champlain reached the lowest lake level (93.5') in 30 years. Another thaw saw Plattsburgh thermometers soar to 45° on 23 January and 41° on the 28th, and by month's end there had only been about 27" of snow and no days below zero at lower elevations. Even the -8° at Saranac Lake on 6 February was not especially cold by Adirondack standards, and by the next day it was back up to 38° in balmy Plattsburgh. There were some strange temperature extremes: Plattsburgh was a sunny 39° on 11 February, but finally saw a sub-zero -2° by midnight. The same city was 33° at midnight of the 13th, but by dawn Saranac Lake was a nippy -2°. Morrisonville residents enjoyed a high of 46° on the 15th, just before a minor storm dropped 6" of snow on Lake Placid 17 February. On the 24th, thermometer readings ranged from -6° at Saranac Lake to a balmy 40° at Plattsburgh. The season ended with a sunny 30° day on 28 February. The average winter temperature was an extraordinary 28.5°, an incredible 8° above normal, and annual precipitation (23.28") ran more than a foot below the normal of 36.05".

A total of 109 species was reported, breaking the old record of 104 set in winter 1998-1999. Although waterfowl were widely scattered, the 28 species reported certainly helped the record total, as did 18 raptors, including six owls and shrike. As might be expected in a mild winter, half-hardies did well, including Turkey Vultures in February, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Flicker and Chipping and Savannah sparrows. Two species that promised to extend their breeding ranges here were Tufted Titmouse, found in unprecedented numbers, and four Carolina Wrens. Rarities were mostly one-day wonders: **Eared Grebe** at Essex 26 January, **Red Phalarope** spinning along the shoreline of Whallon's Bay 24 December. Say's **Phoebe** on the Camp Dudley Road, Westport, 24 February and two **Fish Crows** in Plattsburgh the same day. However, a **Brant** at Westport remained for over a month. An apparent Trumpeter x "Bewick's" Swan hybrid at Ausable Point WMA in February escaped from North Hero, VT, last spring, summered on Arrowhead Lake, Milton, and wintered mostly on the Vermont side at Grand Isle, mouth of Otter Creek and St. Albans. Several Mute and Tundra swans also wintered on

largely ice-free Champlain.

Following the fall report of a Red Bat flying in daylight at Bloomingdale on 3 November, there was an even more exceptional report from Joan Collins of 6 Red Bats flying in daytime at Long Lake, Hamilton County, 4-5 December. Meanwhile, the number of mice in one farmhouse climbed to 67 trapped since mid-July. WPTZ Ch. 5 Plattsburgh featured the Waterfowl Count on the 12 January nightly news.

Bald Eagle pairs were already working on two Franklin County nests by season's end, and the number of wintering birds – especially along Champlain – has become so great that we can no longer report individual sightings. The same is true of Wild Turkey and Tufted Titmouse and will probably be true for a growing list of breeding birds as Atlas 2000 continues.

Among the always-popular winter finches, Pine Grosbeaks put in an appearance, but mostly in small, scattered flocks. Purple Finches were virtually absent. There were only a half-dozen sightings of Red Crossbills and a maximum count of just five. A few were at the Newcomb VIC feeder in December. White-winged Crossbills, with eight reports, were slightly more abundant with a maximum of 50. Six remained at an Elizabethtown feeder into December. Most numerous were Common Redpolls, with flocks of up to 500 reported. As expected in a "redpoll winter," there were about seven Hoary Redpolls reported and probably many others unidentified. Most Pine Siskins and many American Goldfinches moved out. Evening Grosbeaks were widely reported, but a flock of 62 at Inlet, 75 on the Elizabethtown CBC and 140 on the Saranac Lake CBC were the largest numbers.

Atlas observers are asked to keep in contact with their regional coordinator throughout the breeding season. A periodic short note or e-mail providing the number of species per Block, plus details of any unusual finds, would be greatly appreciated. Volunteers can also now reach the DEC Atlas website to view the map of assigned/unassigned Blocks, as well as the 1980-1985 and 2000-2001 species maps and lists, through a link on the new High Peaks Audubon website: [www.hpas.org](http://www.hpas.org).

## CONTRIBUTORS

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AP – Ausable Pt WMA; BB – Bloomingdale Bog; CH – Cumberland Head; CP – Crown Pt; CR – Chazy Ri; ECBC – Elizabethtown CBC 22 Dec; FCBC – Ferrisburg CBC 15 Dec; PCBC – Plattsburgh CBC 16 Dec; PtR – Point au Roche SP; SLCBC – Saranac Lake CBC 29 Dec; TL – Tupper L; WB – Whallon's Bay; WC – NYS Waterfowl Count 12-16 Jan; WM – Wickham Marsh WMA.

### LOONS – DUCKS

**Red-throated Loon:** 2 CH to 5 Jan (MD), first seen 26 Oct; juv Westport 12 Jan (EN,JP,RW).

**Com. Loon:** max 5 WC.

**Horned Grebe:** max 44 WC; 30 Westport 26 Jan (SO,GP,CT), also high.

**EARED GREBE:** basic plum Essex 26 Jan (SO,GP,CT), 2nd ESSE & Reg record.

**Great Blue Heron:** AP 9 Dec (JL,DCR); FCBC; SLCBC; AP 5 Jan (J&RH); Plattsburgh 27 Jan, extremely late.

**Turkey Vulture:** several Mineville 14 Feb (GF), only 2nd winter record.

**Snow Goose:** max 2050 (+ 1 "Blue") FCBC; last 20 Monty Bay 28 Jan (HK).

**Canada Goose:** max 1712 WC.

**BRANT:** Westport 12 Jan-25 Feb (EN,JP,RW,DCR), 2nd ESSE & Reg record.

**Mute Swan:** 1-3 AP 2 Dec-24 Feb (DCR,GW); same 2 WM 12-24 Feb (JP,DCR); 2 Westport 9 Feb (MG,RH,WL,SO), origin unknown.

**Tundra Swan:** 2 PCBC; 2 imm CH 3 Jan (NO); Westport 9 Feb (MG,RH,SO); 5 (2 ad, 3 imm) AP 18-28 Feb (DCR,JL), rare here.

**Gadwall:** Westport 9-25 Jan (MG,DCR).

**N. Pintail:** PtR 14 Jan (HK); 2 Westport 9 Feb (MG); rare winter visitant.

**Green-winged Teal:** Monty Bay 23 Dec (NO); drake Westport 27 Dec-1 Jan (MG); Ticonderoga 2 Feb (DMR); rare in winter.

**Canvasback:** AP 1 Jan (J&RH); only report.

**Ring-necked Duck:** max 68 WC, record winter number.

**scaup (sp.):** max 1100 WC.

**Surf Scoter:** CP Bridge narrows 19 Jan (VT RBA), rare.

**Long-tailed Duck:** WC; AP 19-27 Jan (SO,DCR), same duck?

**Barrow's Goldeneye:** ad drake Westport 29 Jan-9 Feb (RB,WL,RH,SO), a good find.

**Hooded Merganser:** max 44 WC; 1 ECBC & 19 SLCBC noteworthy; other inland sightings Barnum Pd, L Placid, Lower Chateaugay L, Saranac Ri Dec-Feb, exceptional in winter.

**Red-breasted Merganser:** AP; Lower Chateaugay L; PtR; Saranac Ri; Trombley Bay, Westport; also a fine winter showing.

### HAWKS – ALCIDS

**Bald Eagle:** 2 prs nest-building FRAN late Feb (SC,LL); used 2001 nest found Westport 5 Jan (MW), down & guano below, 1st post-DDT era ESSE nest; 2 ad, 1 imm Raquette Pd 13 Dec took loon off ice shelf & consumed same (BF); max 12 Bald Eagle Survey 12-16 Jan, only suggests increased winter regularity along Champlain and some inland waters.

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** I-87 between Exits 37 & 38 CLIN 28 Jan (SJ,BK), late.

**Golden Eagle:** imm Wilmington 10 Dec (DCR), another good find.

**Peregrine Falcon:** PCBC; Ticonderoga 13 Jan, eating Rock Dove on cross of St. Mary's Church steeple; CP Bridge 15 Jan

in snow squall (DMR); Peru 10 Feb; Plattsburgh 19 Feb (GW); Wilmington eyrie 27 Feb (MW); good winter showing. **Gyr Falcon:** gray-phase Westport 15 Dec (R&SS,J&PT), during FCBC.

**Wild Turkey:** max 64 Willsboro Pt 12 Jan (EN,JP RW); now extremely widespread.

**Am. Coot:** Westport 15 Dec-27 Feb (E&JP); 3 CH 13 Jan (J&RH); 2 Port Henry 18 Feb (DCR); exceptional winter numbers.

**RED PHALAROPE:** WB 24 Dec (JS). 3rd ESSE record; Eaton provides a 1906 HAMI record.

#### DOVES – WOODPECKERS

**Rock Dove:** 8 Ticonderoga 8 Feb (DMR), still perched in tree near charred remains of their abandoned farmhouse, burned down 26 Jan in fire department exercise.

**E. Screech-Owl:** gray-phase n. trail to Giant Mt 22 Dec (J&PT), near higher elevation 1994 red-phase locale.

**Snowy Owl:** Bangor-Brushton FRAN Jan.

**Barred Owl:** Keene & TL feeders; max 5 ECBC; plus other reports.

**Short-eared Owl:** N. Moffat Rd Plattsburgh Jan (NO).

**N. Saw-whet Owl:** ECBC; only report.

**Belted Kingfisher:** New Russia 2 Dec (J&PT); 2 ECBC; Lake Placid 25 Jan (RJ), late.

**Black-backed Woodpecker:** 2 SLCBC; 1-2 BB; fem Paul Smiths.

**N. Flicker:** FCBC; PCBC; Ticonderoga Jan (SS); Essex 15 Jan (JS); Westport 20 Feb (J&PT), uncommon so late.

#### FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

**SAY'S PHOEBE:** Camp Dudley Rd Westport 24 Feb (C&JW!), 1st verified ESSE & Reg record.

**N. Shrike:** max 5 ECBC; ~6 others.

**Gray Jay:** 1-4 BB, Bear & Slim Pd trail, Bigelow-Oregon Plains Rds, Paul Smiths. Sabattis Bog, all usual areas.

**FISH CROW:** 2 Plattsburgh 24 Feb with 3 Am. Crows (DCR); with previous reports from Plattsburgh, Saranac L and VT. Atlas observers should take note, but use caution with ID by call alone, esp. after yg Am. Crows fledge.

**Com. Raven:** chased by Wild Turkeys TL yard 18 Dec (CD); max 18 SLCBC; 12 Minerva deer carcass 27 Jan (RJ); 8 Inlet carcass 28 Feb (GL).

**Horned Lark:** max 120 PCBC; 118 FCBC; others CP. Essex. Ticonderoga. Westport.

**Boreal Chickadee:** max 13 Mt Marcy 8-11 Feb (DW); others from a dozen usual locales.

**Tufted Titmouse:** max 16 ECBC; 11 FCBC; 6 PCBC; 3 SLCBC; 12 Essex-Westport 12 Jan (RH.SO); AP; 4 Ticonderoga; TL feeder; 2 Wadhams; = 56 titmice, only hints at numbers.

**Carolina Wren:** 1-2 Hogansburg feeder 27 Dec thru, m singing by Feb (HW); CH 1 Jan (MD); WB 26 Jan (SO.GP.CT); CH feeder 4-6 Feb (JW); a great showing.

**wren (sp.):** Malone feeder 17 & 31 Jan (CH), undoubtedly by Carolina.

**E. Bluebird:** max 48 FCBC.

**Am. Robin:** max 101 FCBC.

**N. Mockingbird:** 3 PCBC; Rouses Pt 15 Feb (WF); good finds.

**European Starling:** small flock overwintered TL village.

**Am. Pipit:** Elizabethtown 22 Jan (J&PT); Westport 9 Feb (RH.SO); 1st ESSE winter records.

**Bohemian Waxwing:** max 235 FCBC; 70 PCBC; 1 SLCBC; flocks of 15-60 AP. Keeseville, Essex-Westport, in spite of sparse buckthorn crop.

**Cedar Waxwing:** max 60 Keeseville 28 Feb (WL), the less numerous waxwing this winter.

#### TANAGERS – WEAVERS

**Chipping Sparrow:** 2 PCBC, no details.

**Savannah Sparrow:** Camp Dudley Rd Westport 15 Dec (J&PT), details to FCBC

compiler.

**Fox Sparrow:** Peru 25 Feb (GW), uncommon in winter.

**White-throated Sparrow:** 3 SLCBC; 1 wintered TL; unusual interior numbers.

**Lapland Longspur:** CR 28 Jan (J&RH); 2 Essex 4 Feb (BM); always a good find.

**Snow Bunting:** max 1000+ CR 28 Jan (J&RH); 600+ Essex 9 Feb (RB,WL); widespread.

**Red-winged Blackbird:** FCBC; PCBC; at feeder Heart L Rd 20 Jan (J&PT); arr Elizabethtown 20 Feb; 4 other Feb arrivals included max 25 Keene Valley 26 Feb (CD).

**Com. Grackle:** 3 PCBC; 2 FCBC; count wk SLCBC; unusual.

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** Inlet feeder "lost in the Adirondacks" 10 Jan (GL); max 12 Camp Dudley Rd Westport 20 Feb (J&PT), more expected location.

**Pine Grosbeak:** max 41 PCBC; 15 other reports of flocks of 1-15, including Inlet & TL feeders and interior at L Colden & Panther Mt.

**Purple Finch:** 4 PCBC; small flock Ft. Ticonderoga 28 Jan; only reports.

**Red Crossbill:** 2 ECBC; CLIN; "a few" Newcomb VIC feeder; 2 Peru; 5 Paul Smiths; 2 Round Pd; only reports.

**White-winged Crossbill:** 6 Elizabethtown feeder [27 Nov]-2 Dec (J&SP); max 50

Paul Smiths 27 Jan (RJ); others PCBC, SLCBC, Barnum Pd, Chubb R, Keene; major decline from the 2000-2001 Atlas nesting season.

**Com. Redpoll:** max 400-500

Whallonsburg 9 Feb (RB,WL); most abundant finch this winter; carefully observed *snow-burrowing* Long L (JC).

**Hoary Redpoll:** ECBC; SLCBC; CLIN Dec-Feb (J&RH); *C. h. exilipes* at feeder Elizabethtown 8 Jan (JP); 2 Whallonsburg in lg redpoll flock 9 Feb (RB,WL); "couple" Inlet feeder.

**Pine Siskin:** max 7 ECBC; 5 PCBC; 3 SLCBC; only reports.

**Am. Goldfinch:** max 91 PCBC; 14 ECBC; 6 FCBC; 4 SLCBC; 50 Rouses Pt 26 Jan (WF); only reports.

**Evening Grosbeak:** max 140 SLCBC; 8 other reports of flocks of 15-62.

#### ADDENDA

**Parasitic Jaeger:** juv Essex, ESSE, NY waters viewed from Charlotte VT 16 Sep 2001 (Theodore Murin).

**jaeger (sp.):** imm/ad same ESSE waters 13 Sep 2001 (Murin, Frederick Pratt).

**SABINE'S GULL:** 2 juv same ESSE waters 13 Sep 2001 (Hank Kaestner, Murin, Pratt); 3rd ESSE & Reg record.

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## REGION 8 – HUDSON-MOHAWK

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Winter 2001–2002 was mild and dry with little snow. As reported from the Albany International Airport, December's mean temperature was 34.1°F, 7.6° above normal. Sunshine averaged a near normal 40%. There were 1.95" of precipitation, 0.98" below normal, with only 7.8" of snow, most falling on the 8th and 9th. January was warm, averaging 31.3°, 9.1° above normal, with only 28% sunshine, 20% below normal. Precipitation was a near normal 2.77", with 22.9" of snow. February averaged 31.6°, 6.61° above normal, with 52% sunshine. Precipitation measured 1.61", 0.66" below normal, with only 3.4" of snow. The continuing mild temperatures meant that water bodies remained open through December, resulting in an excellent variety and high numbers of waterfowl on CBCs.

In the aftermath of the 11 September terrorist attacks, public reservoirs in Albany County were closed to fishermen and birders. The CBC team that covered the Alcove Reservoir had to be accompanied by a security officer.

For the fourth year in a row, a pair of Peregrine Falcons set up housekeeping on the Dunn Memorial Bridge in Albany. With greatly decreased meadow vole populations, Rough-legged Hawk and Short-eared Owl numbers were significantly lower than in previous years. The two Red-headed Woodpeckers that appeared on the Fort Plain CBC were a welcome surprise. Upon inquiry, I was told that a pair had nested on a farm near Stone Arabia, Montgomery County, last summer and that the two young had lingered at least through December.

Lingering landbirds were well represented on CBCs and as overwinterers. Carolina, Winter and Marsh wrens, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Hermit Thrush, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Chipping, Field, Fox, Swamp and White-crowned sparrows were reported.

Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles and Brown-headed Cowbirds overwintered in good numbers and arrived back from their wintering grounds earlier than usual. Paul Connor reported a flock of 500 mostly glossy, singing, strutting male Common Grackles on 29 January in Brookview, Rensselaer County. Winter finches were represented by good numbers of Pine Grosbeaks and Common Redpolls. Purple Finches were notable by their almost complete absence.

The 122 species reported included 23 species of waterfowl, 12 species of hawks, six species of gulls, seven species of owls, eight species of sparrows and eight species of finches.

## CONTRIBUTORS

Kenneth Able, Sue Adair, Elliott Adams, Alan Devoe Bird Club monthly sighting reports (ADBC), Kate Beale, Bob Boehm (Bbo), Robert Budliger, Paul Connor, Bill Cook, Walter Ellison, Mark Fitzsimmons, Jane Graves, Richard Guthrie, Hudson Mohawk Bird Club's Birdline of Eastern New York (BEN), Ruth Lamb, William Lee, Nancy Martin, Andy Mason, Peter Nye, Tom Palmer, Ray Perry, Barbara Putnam, Alison Van Keuren, Carol Whitby, Owen Whitby, Robert Yunick.

## ABBREVIATIONS

ACCBC – Albany County CBC 16 Dec; AR – Alcove Res ALBA; BLCBC – Bolton Landing CBC 16 Dec; CBL – Cossackie Boat Launch GREE; CCCBC – Catskill-Cossackie CBC 18 Dec; ChCBC – Chatham CBC 22 Dec; CL – Collins L SCHE; FPCBC – Fort Plain CBC 29 Dec; FR – Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, Delmar ALBA; FtE – Fort Edward area WASH; FtM – Fort Miller WASH; GI – Green I ALBA; HFCBC – Hudson Falls CBC 29 Dec; HR – Hudson Ri; JGCBC – Johnstown-Gloversville CBC 22 Dec; L7 – Vischer Ferry Power Station/Lock 7 SCHE; LG – L George WARR; MR – Mohawk Ri; NB – New Baltimore GREE; NL – Nassau L RENS; NR – Niskayuna RR Station SCHE; NRP – Nott Rd P, Guilderland ALBA; NWW – Niskayuna Wide Waters SCHE; RL – Round L SARA; SCBC – Salem CBC 28 Dec; ScCBC – Schenectady CBC 15 Dec; SI – Simmons I, Cohoes SARA; SL – Saratoga L SARA; SNHP – Saratoga National Historical P SARA; SRCBC – Southern Rensselaer CBC 22 Dec; SSCBC – Saratoga Spa CBC 15 Dec; TCBC – Troy CBC 29 Dec; TR – Tomhannock Res RENS; WR – Waterviet Res ALBA.

### LOONS – DUCKS

**Red-throated Loon:** Copake L 1 Dec; only report.

**Com. Loon:** 2 ACCBC; CCCBC; FPCBC; SCBC; 7 SSCBC; 6 TCBC; only reports.

**Pied-billed Grebe:** Copake L 1 Dec; L7 31 Dec-10 Feb; only reports.

**Horned Grebe:** Copake L 1 Dec; ACCBC; FPCBC.

**Red-necked Grebe:** 2 ACCBC; 2 SSCBC.

**Great Cormorant:** 3 Cossackie 2, 21 & 23 Dec; 2 Embough Bay 18 Dec; ad ChCBC; Germantown 3 Jan.

**Great Blue Heron:** 37 on 9 CBCs; max 20 ScCBC; 6 Jan & 3 Feb reports.

**Turkey Vulture:** 2 HFCBC; NL 28 Jan;

Clifton Park 3 Feb; Albany 4 Feb; 8 Albany 20 Feb; 6 Guilderland 23 Feb; 25 Albany 25 Feb.

**Snow Goose:** 650 S. Schodack 12, 16 & 19 Dec; max 6052 SSCBC; 4025 TCBC; very large numbers for winter.

**Canada Goose:** high counts 16,011 TCBC; 15,074 SCBC.

**Brant:** CCCBC; only report.

**Mute Swan:** 158 CCCBC; 9 ChCBC; ScCBC; 8 SRCBC; 65 Clermont SP COLU 13 Jan; 6 NL 28 Jan.

**Tundra Swan:** TR 25 Dec; TCBC; Claverack 24 Feb.

**Wood Duck:** ChCBC; HFCBC; 4 SCBC; SSCBC; SRCBC; 2 TCBC.

**Gadwall:** 15 on 2 CBCs; MR Cohoes 6 Jan; L7 10 Feb.



**Am. Wigeon:** 32 ACCBC; TCBC; Germantown 16 Feb; Claverack 28 Feb; only reports.  
**Am. Black Duck:** 1706 on 12 CBCs; high count 348 CCCBC.  
**Mallard:** 7742 on 12 CBCs; max 1533 TCBC; 2168 waterfowl count 13 Jan; 1101 L7 10 Feb.  
**N. Shoveler:** 15 ACCBC; only report.  
**N. Pintail:** 21 on 5 CBCs; 5 Cocksackie 2 Dec; 2 L7 9 Feb; 4 T Northumberland 28 Feb.  
**Green-winged Teal:** 79 on 6 CBCs; Cocksackie 1 Jan; NR 23 Feb.  
**Canvasback:** ACCBC; HFCBC; Stuyvesant 13 Jan; only reports.  
**Ring-necked Duck:** 75 NL 16 Dec; 436 on 8 CBCs; max 172 ACCBC; 9 NR 24 Feb.  
**Greater Scaup:** 43 on 3 CBCs.  
**Lesser Scaup:** 10 NL 16 Dec; 12 on 3 CBCs; only reports.  
**Bufflehead:** 63 on 6 CBCs; only reports.  
**Com. Goldeneye:** 566 on 8 CBCs; max 230 SSCBC; 40 FtM 12 Feb.  
**Hooded Merganser:** 50 Copake 2 Dec; 49 on 10 CBCs; max 142 ACCBC; 12 T Moreau 28 Feb.  
**Com. Merganser:** 2155 on 12 CBCs; max 817 TCBC.  
**Red-breasted Merganser:** TCBC.  
**Ruddy Duck:** 41 Copake L 1 Dec; 154 NL 4 Dec; 325 on 3 CBCs.

#### HAWKS – ALCIDS

**Bald Eagle:** 35 (26 ad, 9 imm) on 9 CBCs; ad & imm Colonie 8 Dec; ad MR Rexford 30 Dec; 2 imm Jefferson 2 Jan; 4 ad & 3 imm Waterford 4 & 17 Jan; ad & imm T Northumberland 4 Jan; imm Gallupville 12 Jan; ad & imm Stockport 13 Jan; 4 ad & 3 imm Germantown 13 Jan; ad Battenkill R T Jackson 14 Jan; ad Gallupville 16 Jan; 2 ad Canajoharie 20 Jan; ad L7 10 Feb; 2 ad Crescent 18 Feb; 2 ad Cohoes 24 Feb; 3 imm Schodack Ldg 24 Feb; 4 ad & 1 imm Half Moon 24 Feb.  
**N. Harrier:** 107 on 11 CBCs; 6 FtE thru;

13 Cocksackie Flats 20 Jan; 10 reports of singles.  
**Sharp-shinned Hawk:** 34 on 10 CBCs; 22 reports of singles.  
**Cooper's Hawk:** 23 on 10 CBCs; 26 reports of singles.  
**N. Goshawk:** Schodack 9 Dec (PC); CCCBC; ChCBC; FPCBC; JGCB; Indian Meadows 3 Feb (RP).  
**Red-shouldered Hawk:** 2 ACCBC; Chatham 12 Jan; Delmar 23 Feb.  
**Red-tailed Hawk:** 714 on 12 CBCs; max 100 FPCBC; 93 TCBC.  
**Rough-legged Hawk:** 28 on 4 CBCs; 3 FtE 22 Jan & 12 Feb; 3 Northumberland 3 Jan; 4 MONT 16 Jan; 6 Cocksackie Flats 20 Jan; 7 reports of singles.  
**Golden Eagle:** ad SCBC.  
**Am. Kestrel:** 25 on 9 CBCs; 21 reports of singles.  
**Merlin:** TCBC; Chatham 21 Dec; Glenco Mills T Taghkanic COLU 30 Jan; Queensbury 28 Feb.  
**Peregrine Falcon:** ad m FtE 7 Dec; ACCBC; CCCBC; HFCBC; 3 SRCBC; Glens Falls 25 Dec; Brookview 16 Jan.  
**Ruffed Grouse:** 33 on 11 CBCs.  
**Wild Turkey:** 1096 on 19 CBCs; max 229 FPCBC; 231 TCBC.  
**Am. Coot:** 40 Copake L 1 Dec; 16 NL 16 Dec; 57 on 4 CBCs; 42 Stuyvesant 13 Jan.  
**Killdeer:** Stuyvesant 13 Jan; SUNYA 19 Feb; Guilderland 28 Feb.  
**Am. Woodcock:** displaying Livingston 20 Feb (Will Yandik).  
**Ring-billed Gull:** 4868 on 11 CBCs; max 2451 TCBC; 285 Hudson 13 Jan; ~1500 lower MR 24 Feb.  
**Herring Gull:** 3202 on 11 CBCs; max 1400 TCBC; 197 Stuyvesant 13 Jan; 200 lower MR Cohoes/Colonie 24 Feb.  
**Iceland Gull:** 2 ACCBC; 2 Cocksackie 21 Dec & 21 Jan; Cohoes 6 Jan; Cocksackie 7 Feb; 2 Colonie 21 Feb.  
**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** 3 TCBC; ad MR Crescent 16 Feb; only reports.  
**Glaucous Gull:** ACCBC; CCCBC; MR Crescent 16 Feb; only reports.

**Great Black-backed Gull:** 724 on 10 CBCs; max 522 TCBC; 500 lower MR Cohoes/Colonie 24 Feb.

#### DOVES – WOODPECKERS

**Rock Dove:** high counts 1990 TCBC; 1046 FPCBC; 1074 HFCBC.

**Mourning Dove:** high counts 673 ScCBC; 496 ChCBC.

**E. Screech-Owl:** 20 on 6 CBCs; 2 reports of singles.

**Great Horned Owl:** 24 on 10 CBCs; 17 other reports.

**Snowy Owl:** LG 20 Dec; Glens Falls 30 Dec; possibly same individual.

**Barred Owl:** 7 on 5 CBCs; 3 Jan reports; no Feb reports.

**Long-eared Owl:** Schodack Ctr 13 Dec (PC); only report.

**Short-eared Owl:** 2 FPCBC; HFCBC; FtE 2 Jan.

**N. Saw-Whet Owl:** Amsterdam 5 Dec (TP); Schodack Ctr 19 Dec (PC); ScCBC.

**Belted Kingfisher:** 32 on 10 CBCs; 12 Jan reports; 2 Feb reports.

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** 2 FPCBC.

**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** 156 on 10 CBCs; high count 37 ChCBC; 19 reports of singles.

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** 9 on 3 CBCs; Livingston 3-4 Jan; Feller Rd T Taghkanic COLU 3-4 Jan.

**Downy Woodpecker:** 677 on 12 CBCs; max 106 ACCBC.

**Hairy Woodpecker:** 200 on 12 CBCs; max 28 ScCBC.

**N. Flicker:** 188 on 11 CBCs; max 48 CCCBC; 9 Jan reports; 10 Feb reports.

**Pileated Woodpecker:** 68 on 12 CBCs; max 16 ACCBC; 22 reports of singles.

#### FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

**N. Shrike:** 7 on 6 CBCs; only 4 reports of singles.

**Blue Jay:** 2472 on 12 CBCs; good numbers.

**Am. Crow:** 18,335 on 12 CBCs; max 5719 TCBC.

**Fish Crow:** ACCBC; 2 TCBC; 4 Jan reports; 13 Feb reports; max 10 Amsterdam 10 Feb.

**Com. Raven:** 47 on 11 CBCs; continues to be widely reported throughout Reg.

**Horned Lark:** 547 on 6 CBCs; max 173 FPCBC; 150 FtE 15 Feb; numbers down from last year.

**Black-capped Chickadee:** max 698 ChCBC; 666 ACCBC; 631 JGCBC.

**Tufted Titmouse:** max 142 ScCBC; 36 SSCBC.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** 125 on 12 CBCs; max 44 JGCBC.

**White-breasted Nuthatch:** 845 on 12 CBCs; max 102 ACCBC.

**Brown Creeper:** 69 on 12 CBCs.

**Carolina Wren:** 46 on 8 CBCs; high count 21 CCCBC; 24 reports of singles.

**Winter Wren:** Guilderland 6 Dec; 5 CCCBC; Livingston 9 Jan; Taghkanic COLU 9 Jan; only reports.

**Marsh Wren:** CCCBC; only report.

**Golden-crowned Kinglet:** 96 on 10 CBCs; 5 Jan reports; 2 Feb reports.

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** 3 ChCBC; only report.

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** ACCBC.

**E. Bluebird:** 832 on 11 CBCs; max 168 ACCBC; 136 SSCBC; in excellent numbers thru.

**Hermit Thrush:** 2 ACCBC; CCCBC; Amsterdam 1 Jan (TP).

**Am. Robin:** 10,687 on 11 CBCs; max 3889 ACCBC; 3216 ChCBC; widespread thru; singing began 22 Feb.

**N. Mockingbird:** 103 on 8 CBCs; 6 Jan reports; 3 Feb reports.

**European Starling:** high count 12,647 CCCBC.

**Am. Pipit:** 7 Amsterdam 1 Dec (TP).

**Bohemian Waxwing:** SRCBC.

**Cedar Waxwing:** 2091 on 11 CBCs; high count 672 SSCBC.

#### WARBLERS

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** ACCBC; 19 CCCBC; only reports.

## TANAGERS – WEAVERS

**Am. Tree Sparrow:** 1672 on 11 CBCs; high count 261 ACCBC; numbers down from last year.

**Chipping Sparrow:** 2 SCBC.

**Field Sparrow:** ACCBC; Chatham 8 Jan; only reports.

**Fox Sparrow:** Kinderhook 3 Dec; Ghent 16 Dec; Canaan 28 Feb.

**Song Sparrow:** 94 on 10 CBCs; high count 26 ACCBC.

**Swamp Sparrow:** ChCBC; 3 SSCBC; 1 singing MR Half Moon Beach SARA 21 Feb (BL).

**White-throated Sparrow:** 251 on 9 CBCs; high count 69 CCCBC.

**White-crowned Sparrow:** ChCBC; FPCBC; Chatham 2 Feb; only reports.

**Dark-eyed Junco:** 2686 on 12 CBCs; max 1426 SCBC; 364 ACCBC; numbers down from last year.

**Lapland Longspur:** no reports.

**Snow Bunting:** 542 on 3 CBCs; high count 445 FPCBC; 85 Glenville 2 Feb; 30 Jefferson 21 Dec; 150+ Niska Isle 10 Feb; 33 Gansevoort 12 Feb.

**N. Cardinal:** high counts 110 ScCBC; 105 TCBC; 97 ChCBC.

**Red-winged Blackbird:** 119 on 6 CBCs; 125+ Papsanee Creek area 17 & 23 Jan; numerous after 16 Feb; 2 Wardsboro T Hague 21 Feb; singing on territory Cohoes 24 Feb.

**Rusty Blackbird:** Delmar 9-10 Jan;

Chatham 5 Feb; only reports.

**Com. Grackle:** 53 on 7 CBCs; 500 Brookview 29 Jan.

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** 691 on 8 CBCs; high count 424 TCBC; 300 Brookview 29 Jan (PC).

**Pine Grosbeak:** 25 JGCBC; 8 SCBC; max 80+ Cherry Plain RENS 17 Jan; widely reported.

**Purple Finch:** 69 on 7 CBCs; few other reports.

**House Finch:** 2251 on 12 CBCs; max 397 SRCBC.

**Red Crossbill:** no reports.

**White-winged Crossbill:** 6 Cossayuna 6 Dec; New Salem 15-16 Dec; 3 JGCBC; SRCBC.

**Com. Redpoll:** 1477 on 12 CBCs; high counts 468 HFCBC; 305 FPCBC; max 1000+ Gansevoort 22 Jan (RB); widely reported.

**Pine Siskin:** 237 on 6 CBCs; high count 182 ScCBC; in small numbers at feeders Jan-Feb.

**Am. Goldfinch:** max 275 JGCBC; 226 TCBC; in small numbers Jan-Feb.

**Evening Grosbeak:** 396 on 5 CBCs; high count 308 JGCBC; 20-30 Stony Creek 10 Jan; 15 Jefferson 23 Jan; 10 JL 23 Jan; 45 Jefferson 6 Feb.

**House Sparrow:** max 425 FPCBC; 422 TCBC.

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## REGION 9 – HUDSON-DELAWARE

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This was by far the warmest winter on record and one of the driest. The incredibly warm season resulted in many unusual species reaching many Christmas Bird Counts. But surprisingly, many winter finches and other northern species made appearances, too. The out-of-range birds were spectacular as well.

December averaged 7.1° to 7.8°F higher than normal. Both Poughkeepsie and White Plains reached 70° in early December. Precipitation ranged from 2" to 3.7", with Dutchess and Westchester counties 1" drier than normal and Sullivan County near normal. But Sullivan County only managed 6.5" of snow for the month. Westchester County recorded no measurable snow for December.

January was even higher above normal in average temperature. Poughkeepsie was 8.5° above normal for the month, with the city reaching 50° or higher for four straight days at the end of January. White Plains reached 67° on 29 January. The northern sections of the Region had less than 1.5" of rain for the month. White Plains had its only significant snowfall for the entire season when only 4" fell on 20 January.

February was just as bizarre. White Plains reached at least 50° on 10 of the 28 days in the month. Poughkeepsie was 7.1° warmer than average, and less than 1" of precipitation fell over the entire Region for the month.

The number of wintering Black Vultures continues to astound. The Southern Orange CBC broke its own record with **182**, along with 80 Turkey Vultures. The Putnam Count has also gone to the vultures, with 76 Black and 60 Turkey vultures. They also reported a Red-throated Loon on the Hudson River.

An unusual gull was found by Valerie Freer at Kiamesha Lake in Monticello, Sullivan County, on 4 February, which she tentatively identified as a **Slaty-backed Gull**. Its identification could not be verified that day and attempts to locate the bird the next day were fruitless. John Haas relocated the bird in the same place on 8 February but again, definitive looks at the bird were not obtained. Then, on 20 February, the gull was refound at the Neversink Reservoir and five lucky birders were able to verify its identification. Attempts at finding the bird in the days following were again fruitless. (See article elsewhere in this issue.)

Another gull found in the same area, with many characteristics of Black-headed Gull, appeared to be a hybrid. Kevin McGowan suggested that it might be mixed with a Ringed-billed Gull.

The **Rufous Hummingbird** found at Lenoir Nature Preserve in Yonkers on 17 November continued through December. The bird initially disappeared in the new year only to be found about 200 yards away from the butterfly garden it had been visiting, on 5 and 6 January. This is the latest date for any species of hummingbird in the state.

A second hummingbird was found by Hugh Martin at the same garden on 7

December. The bird was identified as a female *archilochus hummingbird*. It was seen sporadically until 23 December. The bird was continually chased off by the Rufous Hummingbird. There continues to be disagreement on whether the bird was a Ruby-throated or a Black-chinned hummingbird. There is one point on which nearly all observers agree: vigorous tail-pumping seen on most Black-chinned Hummingbirds was never observed. But due to the great difficulty of separating the females of the two species, this editor will leave it at *archilochus* sp. and let others debate its identity.

Indicative of the warm weather, the East Orange County CBC had a Wood Thrush and the Dutchess count found an Osprey.

Despite many reports farther north, the only report for **Bohemian Waxwing** came from Steve Carlin (via Sullivan County Audubon Society): four were in Willowemoc on 22 December.

A female Black-throated Blue Warbler was coming to a feeder in Rockland County in February. This was Rockland's first winter record. An Ovenbird, seen during count week, failed to show up the day of the Putnam CBC.

A Lapland Longspur was at the Neversink Reservoir 26-27 February for Sullivan's second county record.

The Bronx-Westchester CBC broke its all time high with 125 species, highlighted by the two hummingbirds. Three Nashville Warblers were found, with two of them in Region 9, both in Yonkers. Other highlights from the count that occurred on the Region 9 side included Red-necked Grebe off New Rochelle, American Bittern in Rye, Snowy Egret and Black-bellied Plover in Larchmont, Red-headed Woodpecker in Scarsdale, Seaside Sparrow in Rye, Baltimore Oriole in Hastings-on-Hudson and Common Redpolls. An interesting side note was that more Red-bellied Woodpeckers were seen on the count than Downy Woodpeckers (295 vs. 225). First time ever!

Other notable species included: Iceland Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Glaucous Gull, Northern Shrike, Dark-eyed "Oregon" Junco, Pine Grosbeak, White-winged Crossbill, Evening Grosbeak.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

BWCBC – Bronx-Westchester CBC; EGR – Edith G. Read Sanctuary; MC – Marshlands Conservancy; PCBC – Putnam County CBC; RCCBC – Rockland County CBC; SGNWR – Shawangunk Grasslands NWR; SOCBC – Southern Orange CBC; WRNWR – Wallkill River NWR.

### LOONS – DUCKS

**Red-throated Loon:** 36 EGR 16 Dec; 18 Rye 23 Dec; Little Stony Pt PUTN 29 Dec.

**Com. Loon:** 9 Rye 23 Dec; New Hamburg DUTC Jan.

**Pied-billed Grebe:** more reports than usual.

**Red-necked Grebe:** New Rochelle 23 Dec.

**Northern Gannet:** 2 EGR 1 Dec; 2 Rye 23 Dec.

**Double-crested Cormorant:** 70 WEST 23 Dec.

**Great Cormorant:** 70 WEST 23 Dec.

**Am. Bittern:** MC 23 Dec.

**Great Blue Heron:** 16 EGR 8 Jan.

**Great Egret:** WEST 23 Dec.

**Snowy Egret:** WEST 23 Dec; Larchmont 20 Jan (TB).

**Black Vulture:** 182 ORAN 22 Dec (SOCBC); 76 PUTN 29 Dec (PCCBC); 17 Pawling CBC 1 Jan.

**Turkey Vulture:** 83 Peekskill CBC 15 Dec; 80 ORAN 22 Dec (SOCBC); 60 PUTN 29 Dec (PCCBC).

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** Rockland L 17 Dec (RAS).

**Snow Goose:** numerous scattered reports, more than most winters.

**Canada Goose:** small form Waryas P DUTC 28 Jan (CV); 22,422 Waterfowl Count DUTC Jan.

**Wood Duck:** 10 Wappinger L 8 Jan, 7 Feb.

**Am. Wigeon:** 2 Wappinger L 26 Feb.

**N. Shoveler:** 112 Larchmont Res 2 Dec.

**N. Pintail:** 24 Bashakill 26 Feb; 19 Six-and-a-half Station Marsh ORAN 24 Feb.

**Green-winged Teal:** Wappinger L 26 Feb.

**Canvasback:** very low numbers in Dec; 300 Newburgh Jan; 1200 Croton Pt P 18 Jan.

**Redhead:** Croton Pt P 18 Jan.

**Ring-necked Duck:** very common this season; 50 Abels pd 29 Jan; 43 Round Pd DUTC 8 Feb.

**Greater Scaup:** very low numbers in Dec.

**Lesser Scaup:** 35 EGR 23 Dec; 340 EGR 20 Jan.

**scoter sp:** Rye 23 Dec.

**Ruddy Duck:** 30 Sylvan L 6 Feb.

### HAWKS – ALCIDS

**Osprey:** Hopewell Junction 15 Dec (PF).

**Bald Eagle:** low numbers on Hudson due to warm winter; 50-60 ORAN and SULL 2-3 Feb (BAS).

**N. Harrier:** 6-17 SGNWR thru (SK,KH); 2-13 WRNWR thru (SK,KH).

**N. Goshawk:** Mohonk/Ashokan CBC 15 Dec; Scarsdale 23 Dec.

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** more reports than previous winters.

**Rough-legged Hawk:** DUTC 15 Dec; Chestnut Ridge Rd DUTC 5 Jan (BK); SGNWR 8, 12 Jan (JH,OCA); 1-2 WRNWR 12 Dec thru (SK,KH).

**Golden Eagle:** 1-3 Stissing Mt thru; Bashakill 18 Feb (SG).

**Merlin:** EGR 23 Dec; Pine Plains 2 Feb (ND).

**Peregrine Falcon:** Ellenville 8 Dec; Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge thru; Sprain Parkway 26 Jan.

**N. Bobwhite:** RCCBC 16 Dec.

**Am. Coot:** 107 Sylvan L 19 Feb.

**Black-bellied Plover:** Larchmont 23 Dec.  
**Killdeer:** arr WRNWR 26 Feb (SK,KH).  
**Am. Oystercatcher:** EGR 1 Dec; MC 24 Feb.

**Greater Yellowlegs:** 1-6 EGR thru.  
**Ruddy Turnstone:** 7 Rye 23 Dec, 21 Jan.  
**Purple Sandpiper:** 59 Rye 23 Dec.  
**Dunlin:** 20 Rye 23 Dec, 21 Jan; 15 MC 24 Feb

**Com. Snipe:** Piermont Pier 3 Feb (RAS).  
**Am. Woodcock:** WRNWR 29 Jan; 3 MC 17 Feb; WRNWR 20 Feb; DUTC 24 Feb.  
**Black-headed x ? Gull hybrid:** Kiamasha L Monticello 4 Feb (VF); Woodbourne 22, 23 Feb (KM); intro.

**Bonaparte's Gull:** 8 WEST 23 Dec.  
**Iceland Gull:** 1-2 Monticello, Woodbourne area Jan-Feb (VF,JH).  
**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** ad Neversink Res 20 Feb (VF).

**SLATY-BACKED GULL:** 1 ad Kiamasha L SULL 4 Feb (VF), 8 Feb (JH), Neversink Res 20 Feb (VF,JH,RD,MG,PBU); intro.

**Glaucous Gull:** Neversink Res and Woodbourne 10 Feb (VF).

#### DOVES – WOODPECKERS

**Monk Parakeet:** 5 Rye 23 Dec.  
**Barn Owl:** Rhinebeck 15 Dec.  
**E. Screech-Owl:** record numbers on some CBCs.

**Long-eared Owl:** Red Hook 7 Dec, 1 Jan.  
**Short-eared Owl:** 1-9 SGNWR thru; 1-7 WRNWR thru; m in courtship display SGNWR 28 Feb (SK,KH).

**N. Saw-whet Owl:** DUTC 31 Dec; EGR 1-28 Jan; Eastchester 29 Jan.

**ARCHILOCHUS SP:** Lenoir Nature Preserve 7, 8, 23 Dec (HM,MB,TB).

**RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD:** Lenoir Nature Preserve 1-30 Dec, 5-6 Jan (MB); intro.

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** Scarsdale 23 Dec.

**Belted Kingfisher:** more reports than usual.

#### FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

**N. Shrike:** Baird P 23 Jan (RTWBC); Swan L SULL 27 Feb (VF).

**Fish Crow:** Yonkers 10 Jan; 5 Croton Pt P 26 Jan; Poughkeepsie 25 Feb.

**Com. Raven:** nest Pine Plains 28 Feb.

**Horned Lark:** 200 Red Hook 2 Dec, 2 Jan; 75 Orange Co Airport 8 Jan; 12 EGR 23 Jan; 25 WRNWR 29 Jan.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** many reports throughout.

**Carolina Wren:** well reported even from northern counties.

**House Wren:** MC 10 Dec; Lenoir Preserve 1-20 Dec.

**Marsh Wren:** 3 MC 10 Dec; 2 Rye 23 Dec; Cornwall 24 Dec (WC).

**Wood Thrush:** East Orange CBC 15 Dec.

**Am. Robin:** high counts for many CBCs.

**Brown Thrasher:** 4 BWCBC 23 Dec; Nyack Beach SP 5 Jan (RAS).

**Am. Pipit:** EGR 11 Dec, 10 Jan; 20 Croton Pt P 12 Jan (RJ).

**BOHEMIAN WAXWING:** 4 Willowemoc 22 Dec (SC).

**Cedar Waxwing:** 200 Vassar Farm 16 Feb.

#### WARBLERS

**Nashville Warbler:** 2 Yonkers 23 Dec.

**Black-throated Blue Warbler:** f at feeder ROCK 21 Dec (DC,CW).

**Ovenbird:** PUTN late Dec.

**Com. Yellowthroat:** Hastings-on-Hudson 23 Dec.

#### TANAGERS – WEAVERS

**E. Towhee:** many reports this season, nearly absent in recent winters.

**Am. Tree Sparrow:** many departed early.

**Chipping Sparrow:** Lenoir Nature Preserve 1-20 Dec; Hastings-on-Hudson 23 Dec; Pawling CBC 1 Jan; Poughquag Jan-Feb (CP).

**Seaside Sparrow:** MC 23 Dec.

**Fox Sparrow:** high counts for many CBCs.

**White-crowned Sparrow:**

Mohonk/Ashokan CBC 15 Dec.  
**Dark-eyed "Oregon" Junco:** ULST 3 Dec (SS).  
**Lapland Longspur:** Neversink Res 26-27 Feb (VF).  
**Snow Bunting:** EGR 1 Dec; 18 East Orange CBC 15 Dec; 24 RCCBC 16 Dec; Red Hook 2 Jan (RTWBC); 25 Orange Co Airport 8 Jan (JH).  
**Rusty Blackbird:** 56 Peekskill CBC 15 Dec; 21 RCCBC 16 Dec; 10 BWCBC 23 Dec; 14 Millerton DUTC 20 Feb.  
**Com. Grackle:** 2000 heading SW Yonkers 20 Feb.  
**Baltimore Oriole:** Hastings-on-Hudson 23 Dec.  
**Pine Grosbeak:** 2 Parksville 22 Dec (BG).  
**White-winged Crossbill:** 3 Monticello 10

Dec (DM); Poughkeepsie 9 Jan (B&DL).  
**Com. Redpoll:** 2 Callicoon early Dec; Claryville early Dec; 6 WRNWR 12 Dec; 6 Horseshoe L Rd SULL 13 Dec; 7 Rye 23 Dec; 8 Putnam Co CBC 29 Dec; 3 Verbank DUTC 11, 24 Feb.  
**Pine Siskin:** 10 Verbank 3 Dec; 41 Claryville 8 Dec; 18 Yankee L 8 Dec; 15 ULST 15 Dec; RCCBC 16 Dec; 15 Stissing Mt 9 Feb; few at feeder Mt Kisco thru.  
**Evening Grosbeak:** 81 Horseshoe L Rd SULL early Dec; 19 Claryville early Dec; 3 Woodbourne early Dec.

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## REGION 10 – MARINE

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The weather was warm and dry again this season. There was little snow and there were few cold days. After the warmest November on record, December's mean temperature was 44.1°F. There were four new record highs, three at the beginning of the month and one in the middle. The temperature did not dip below freezing until month's end. Then, January had a mean of 39.9° versus a 32.1° norm. January was the eighth warmest on record. Without any new highs, February tied for warmest February on record, with a mean temperature of 40.6° versus a 34.6° norm.

December's rainfall totaled 2.27", 1.63" below normal; January had 1.93" and 2.19" below normal; and February, 0.71", 2.44" below normal. With a trace of snow, February was the third driest on record and tied for the second lowest snowfall for a February.

The majority of the Christmas Bird Counts in the Region occurred on the first available weekend. This was during a period of unprecedented warm weather, both prior to and during mid December. As a consequence, they reported a spate of late

and/or delayed migrants and an abundance of half-hardies.

With the results now on the Internet (although not completely easy to use), it is possible to examine reports systematically. In viewing the 11 Long Island counts, in Kings, Queens, Nassau and Suffolk counties, 77 Great Egrets were reported, a remarkable number. The Southern Nassau count had 49 of this total. Another species we looked at was Red-tailed Hawk, now resident in Manhattan's Central Park and evidently also in Brooklyn recently. There were 274 on Long Island and an additional 53 on Staten Island. These large raptors are doing remarkably well.

A **Pacific Loon** in near alternate plumage was found by Steve Biasetti in Seatuck Creek, East Hampton on 22 December. It subsequently appeared in Tuthill Cove, East Moriches and Center Moriches until at least the end of the month.

On 1 December, Dave Russell, of Elmira, joined a pelagic trip out of Brielle, New Jersey, into New Jersey and New York waters. In New York waters, he reported 30 **Northern Fulmars**, 2 Manx Shearwaters, 100 Northern Gannets, 400 Red Phalaropes, 12 Pomarine Jaegers, 1 Parasitic Jaeger, 3 Laughing Gulls, 50 Bonaparte's Gulls, 3 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, 1000 Black-legged Kittiwakes, 2 Razorbills and 1 Atlantic Puffin. He commented, "It was a great trip!" (Phil Jeffrey posted a similar report.)

A number of Greater White-fronted Geese wintered in the area from Calverton to the Hamptons. Some of these appeared to be hybrids with Canada Geese. The **Ross's Goose** seen late last season in Calverton, Suffolk County, was found again in early December, returned on 5 January, and stayed to be seen on and off to 6 February. Several small form Canada Geese were reported from the same place and at Hook Pond, East Hampton. Although these almost always seem to be called "Richardson's" subspecies, with no explanation for how this was determined, that designation cannot be assumed.

The **Barnacle Goose** reported last season remained. A second, which may have been present all along, was also found. The birds, never in the same area at the same time, were found on various ponds on both the North and South forks in mid February. A third bird was located on Oakland Lake in Bayside, Queens on 1 January by Art Skopec. It was subsequently reported there by others on 3 and 23 February.

The provenance of Barnacle Goose on the east coast remains an ongoing problem. Interestingly, more than a half-dozen others were reported this winter at various places in the mid-Atlantic and Northeast. It is not known how the various state records committees will act on reports submitted. It might be noted that the breeding range of this species in Europe has recently undergone a change, with birds nesting far south of their historic Arctic range. Perhaps, as new breeding/migration patterns emerge, this might be an explanation for these birds.

A Tufted Duck was found on Swan Pond, Patchogue on 12 January and was last reported 21 January. Also on that date, a bird appearing to be a drake Tufted Duck, but with a short tuft, was spotted on Massapequa Lake. On 24 February, the latter bird was identified as a Tufted Duck/scaup hybrid by Ken Feustel and others.

This season we seem to have had a proliferation of both western and European

waterfowl, including Greater White-fronted Goose, Ross's Goose, Barnacle Goose, Eurasian Wigeon, "Eurasian" Green-winged Teal, Tufted Duck and Barrow's Goldeneye. Is it the weather?

On 27 January, Steve Nanz and Inara Schwartz reported a large white falcon by the lake in Prospect Park, Brooklyn. Steve subsequently identified the bird as a Gyrfalcon. A NYSARC report was requested.

A Lesser Yellowlegs was at Center Moriches 24 December. Another was found on the Southern Nassau CBC at Massapequa Preserve 30 December. The latter stayed through the winter, along with a large group of Greater Yellowlegs and 3-4 Long-billed Dowitchers. Among other out-of-season shorebirds was a Willet on the Quogue-Watermill CBC 15 December.

A **White-winged Dove** appeared at a feeder in Theodore Roosevelt County Park, Montauk, 6-7 December.

The two **Calliope Hummingbirds**, reported last season at Fort Tryon Park, Manhattan, but identified just as this season started, remained until 26 and 27 December. On 25 December, while birding in Central Park with a group, Tom Fiore came across a hummingbird, tentatively identified as a member of the *Selasphorus* group.

On 16 December, Richard Guthrie reported that Kenn Kaufman, Scott Haber and others birding in Central Park saw and heard an *Empidonax* flycatcher. The observers noted it as "99% sure it is a **Least Flycatcher**," per Kaufman's comments that the remaining uncertainty was "because we could not rule out Dusky." Later in the morning, some vocalizations (call notes only) were heard, which Kaufman used to eliminate most other *Empidonax* species. "We did note a small bill, rather distinctive eye-ring, and other more subtle features which will be enumerated on the rare bird sighting report to be submitted to NYSARC." This date for an *Empidonax* flycatcher, regardless of species, is remarkable.

On 1 December, Steve Walter reported an Ash-throated Flycatcher at Fort Tilden, Queens, along with a late Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. The gnatcatcher was found again 15 December on the Brooklyn CBC. Another Ash-throated Flycatcher was found on the Central Suffolk CBC along Wading River Road on 22 December. An Eastern Phoebe was seen on the Montauk CBC 15 December. There were also two different Western Kingbirds, one at Mashomack Preserve, Shelter Island, from 7 December to 4 January, and the other at Oak Beach, Suffolk County, on 7 December.

This very warm winter produced its share of the usual wintering warblers, including: Orange-crowned, Yellow-rumped and Palm warblers, Common Yellowthroat and Yellow-breasted Chat. In addition, an additional ten species were seen for shorter periods, including: **Tennessee Warbler**, six Nashville Warblers, two Northern Parulas, four Pine Warblers, two Blackpoll Warblers, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, two Ovenbirds, Northern Waterthrush and two Wilson's Warblers. That totals 15 warbler species for the winter season, probably a record number for the state!

There was a reasonably large movement of northern finches this past fall, but



few remained to winter. If birds that migrated through our area on the way south were on the move, they seemed to have returned by a different route.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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## ABBREVIATIONS

APP – Alley Pond P QUEE; CP – Central P; DP – Democrat Pt FI; FBF – Floyd Bennett Field; FI – Fire I; FP – Forest P QUEE; FTR – Ft. Tyron P Manhattan; FTT – Fort Tilden QUEE; GC – Green-wood Cemetery KING; GRP – Grumman Pd, Calverton SUFF; HP – Hook Pd, Southampton; INP – Inwood P, Manhattan; JBCH – Jones Beach; JBWE – Jones Beach West End; JBWR – Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge; LI – Long I; MAP – Massapequa Preserve NASS; MNSA – Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside; MP – Montauk Pt; MSH – Mashomack Preserve, Shelter I; NYRBA – New York Rare Bird Alert; PAL – Patchogue L SUFF; PBP – Pelham Bay P BRON; PEL – pelagic trip to Hudson Canyon; PL – Pt Lookout side Jones Inlet; PP – Prospect P KING; RB – Ransom Beach, Bayville NASS; SHIN – Shinnecock Inlet; SHU – Shu Swamp (Mill Neck Preserve) NASS; SI – Staten I; SP – Shorts Pd, Bridgehampton; VCP – Van Cortlandt P BRON.

**Christmas Bird Count designations** (These 4 letter codes can also be used to look up full results on the Internet) NJLH – Lower Hudson 16 Dec; NYBR – Brooklyn 15 Dec; NYBW – Bronx-Westchester 23 Dec; NYCA – Captree 16 Dec; NYCS – Central Suffolk Co 22 Dec; NYMK – Montauk 15 Dec; NYNN – Northern Nassau Co 22 Dec; NYOR – Orient 29 Dec; NYQU – Queens 15 Dec; NYQW – Quogue-Watermill 15 Dec; NYSG – Sagaponack 16 Dec; NYSI – Staten Island 15 Dec; NYSM – Smithtown 27 Dec; NYSN – Southern Nassau Co 30 Dec.

### LOONS – DUCKS

**PACIFIC LOON:** Seatuck Creek East Hampton 22 Dec (SB) to end of month.  
**N. FULMAR:** 30 PEL 1 Dec.

**Manx Shearwater:** 2 PEL 1 Dec.

**N. Gannet:** 100 PEL 1 Dec.

**Great Egret:** 77 on 11 LI CBCs, including 49 NYSN 30 Dec.

**Snowy Egret:** PBP 23 Dec-26 Jan.  
**Little Blue Heron:** NYCA 16 Dec;  
 NYOR North Haven 29 Dec.  
**Tricolored Heron:** PL 5 Jan (KF).  
**Cattle Egret:** NYSG Bridgehampton 16 Dec (PAB, SM).  
**Turkey Vulture:** 7 FTR 7 Dec; 3 NYBK 15 Dec; NYQU 15 Dec; CP 22 Jan; FBF & JBWR 26 Jan; Northville 14 Feb; 2 Montauk 16 Feb; Calverton & Rocky Mt Conservation Area & Sag Harbor 22 Feb.  
**Greater White-fronted Goose:** up to 4 wintered from Calverton to the Hamptons; also several white-fronted x Canada hybrids.  
**Snow Goose:** large number wintered JBWR; others.  
**ROSS'S GOOSE:** GRP last season, early Dec, returned 5 Jan, then on and off to 6 Feb.  
**Canada Goose:** small forms HP & GRP.  
**BARNACLE GOOSE:** 1 reported last season continued & 2nd, which may have been present all along, at various ponds both forks LI into mid Jan, reappeared mid Feb; Oakland L Bayside QUEE 1 Jan, 3 & 23 Feb (AS).  
**Tundra Swan:** sev HP and ponds in East Hampton area thru; max 7 but mostly 2-3.  
**Wood Duck:** 20 SHU 5 Jan.  
**Eurasian Wigeon:** GC & RB thru; PAL and 3-4 others to the east.  
**Green-winged "Eurasian" Teal:** VCP thru; NYSN Oceanside 30 Dec; Baldwin 4 Jan; Speonk 25 Dec-21 Jan; NYCS, Ransom Beach 22 Dec- late Jan; Short's Pd Bridgehampton 12-26 Jan.  
**Tufted Duck:** Swan Pd Patchogue 12-21 Jan.  
**Tufted Duck x scaup sp:** looked like a drake Tufted Duck with a short tuft Massapequa L 21 Feb thru, identified as hybrid 24 Feb (KF, et al).  
**King Eider:** small numbers MP thru.  
**Com. Eider:** PL 10 Dec; JBWE 19 Dec; daily MP; max 1000 MP 26 Jan.  
**Harlequin Duck:** up to 7 PL thru; LI Sound at Northville; 2 off Georgica Cut;

3 Horton Pt; off Ransom Beach Bayville; MP.

**scoters:** at MP were in the thousands, perhaps 10,000 White-winged and 5000 Surf, with numbers of Black lower, but with good numbers along the South Shore at places like Ditch Plains and Georgica Pd 19 Jan.

**Barrow's Goldeneye:** NYOR 29 Dec, east side Shelter I 29 Dec; RB late Dec thru.

## HAWKS – ALCIDS

**Osprey:** JBWR 15 Dec; 2 arr Napeague Meadow Rd East Hampton 16 Feb, record early.

**Bald Eagle:** FTR 8 Dec; NYSG East Hampton Town Dump 16 Dec; NYNN Lloyd Harbor 22 Dec; Riverside P 2 Jan.

**Red-tailed Hawk:** 274 on 11 LI CBCs 15-30 Dec; 53 NYSI 15 Dec.

**Rough-legged Hawk:** 2 light morph Cutchogue 2 Dec; dark morph East Hampton Town Dump 16 Dec; Montauk 15 & 22 Dec; 2 NYSN 30 Dec.

**Gyr Falcon:** white morph PP 27 Jan (SN, IS); NYSARC report requested.

**Wild Turkey:** INP 16 Dec & 7 Feb; 5 NYSG 16 Dec; GRP area 1 Jan.

**N. Bobwhite:** 27 NYMK 15 Dec; 11 NYSG 16 Dec.

**Virginia Rail:** 6 NYMK 15 Dec; 3 NYSG 16 Dec; 3 NYNN 22 Dec; 2 NYSN 30 Dec; MAP 4 Jan; SHU 5 Jan.

**Com. Moorhen:** imm Aquebogue 15 Jan; on a creek along Hall's Ln Bridgehampton 17 Jan.

**Am. Oystercatcher:** 10 DP 5 Dec; 19 NYSN 30 Dec.

**Greater Yellowlegs:** sev MAP 30 Dec thru.

**Lesser Yellowlegs:** Center Moriches 24 Dec; MAP 30 Dec thru.

**Willet:** NYQW 15 Dec.

**Red Knot:** sev dozen in Dunlin/Black-bellied Plover flock JBWE thru.

**Purple Sandpiper:** rock jetties Breezy Pt KING to MP; numbers at each place much

smaller this year.

**Dunlin:** 2000-3000 on beach JBWE with Black-bellied Plover, Red Knot, Sanderling thru.

**Long-billed Dowitcher:** 3-4 MAP 30 Dec thru.

**dowitcher sp:** 2 NYNN 22 Dec.

**Com. Snipe:** 2 NYBK 15 Dec; 2 NYNN 22 Dec; MAP late Dec thru; East Quogue; others.

**Red Phalarope:** 400 PEL 1 Dec.

**Pomarine Jaeger:** 12 PEL 1 Dec.

**Parasitic Jaeger:** 1 PEL 1 Dec.

**Laughing Gull:** 3 PEL 1 Dec.

**Little Gull:** PL 14 Jan then sporadically thru; SHIN 3 Feb.

**Black-headed Gull:** Georgica Pd thru; 2-3 PL thru; PP 1 Jan thru.

**Iceland Gull:** widely scattered.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** 3 PEL 1 Dec; others widely scattered.

**Glaucous Gull:** JBCH 20 Jan; Agawam Pd 26-27 Jan; SHIN 3 Feb; PAL 10 Feb.

**Black-legged Kittiwake:** 1000 PEL 1 Dec; numbers wintered off MP.

**Dovekie:** oil-soaked bird found at Three Mile Harbor 1 Dec, died next day at rehabilitator; fly-by MP 29 Jan.

**Forster's Tern:** Georgica Pd 5 Dec.

**Com. Murre:** MP 25 Feb (JF).

**Thick-billed Murre:** MP 26 Dec (JC), 1 Jan (PL).

**Razorbill:** large numbers wintered MP, max 75; 2 PEL 1 Dec; 4 Cedar Pt East Hampton 29 Dec; JBCH fishing piers 1 Jan; 2 Long Beach 19 Jan; 2 FTT 19 Jan; Culloden Pt 19 Jan; 6 off SHIN 24 Feb.

**Atlantic Puffin:** PEL 1 Dec.

#### DOVES – WOODPECKERS

**WHITE-WINGED DOVE:** Theodore Roosevelt County Pk Montauk 6-7 Dec, at feeder.

**Monk Parakeet:** 23 NYBK 15 Dec; 2 Fort Schuyler (NY Maritime College) 26 Jan; 7 Lynbrook 9 Feb; resident PBP.

**Barn Owl:** FBF 23 Dec; 2 NYSN 30 Dec.

**Snowy Owl:** Gilgo 5 Dec; 3 JBWE thru;

Dune Rd near Ponquogue Bridge; Breezy Pt 1 Jan thru; 3 Breezy Pt 16 Feb; Nassau Pt south of Cutchogue early to mid Feb; Great Kills P SI.

**Barred Owl:** INP 16 Dec, 27 Dec, 5 Jan.

**Long-eared Owl:** East Hampton 9-10

Dec; NYMK 15 Dec; 2 NYSG 16 Dec;

Center Moriches badly injured 26 Dec.

**Short-eared Owl:** NYQU 15 Dec; NYSG 16 Dec; NYCS 22 Dec; Dune Rd west of Ponquogue Bridge 1 Jan thru; JBWE 10 Feb.

**N. Saw-whet Owl:** 4 PBP 2 Dec; NYBK 15 Dec; NYQU 15 Dec; 2 NYSG 16 Dec; 2 BRON 23 Dec; PBP 29 Dec; NY Botanical Gardens BRON 2 Jan; JBWR 27 Jan; 3 PBP 3 Feb.

**CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD:** 2 FTR thru 26 Dec and 27 Dec

**HUMMINGBIRD SP:** possible

*Selasphorus* seen by five birders CP 25 Dec (TF, et al).

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** 2 CP thru; Captree 8 Dec; Three Mile Harbor 14-16 Dec; MSH 29 Dec; TNC's Uplands Farm Sanctuary, Cold Spring Harbor 6 Jan; Muttontown Preserve 19-20 Feb.

#### FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

**LEAST FLYCATCHER:** *Empidonax* flycatcher seen and call notes heard CP 16 Dec, "99% sure it is a Least," (KK), call notes used to eliminate most other "empid" species. NYSARC report to be submitted. Extremely late date for either Least or an unlikely Dusky, the other possibility (KK, SH, RG).

**E. Phoebe:** NYMK 15 Dec.

**ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER:**

FTT 1 Dec; NYCS Wading Ri Rd 22 Dec.

**W. Kingbird:** MSH 7 Dec-4 Jan; Oak Beach SUFF Co 7 Dec.

**N. Shrike** MSH 10 Dec.

**Tree Swallow:** MP 1 Dec; FTT 2 Dec.

**House Wren:** NYBK 15 Dec; NYSG East Hampton landfill 16 Dec; Smithtown 14 Jan.

**Winter Wren:** PBP 29 Dec; SHU 5 Jan;

MAP 10 Jan, 24 Feb.

**Marsh Wren:** HP 2 Dec; 10 NYSG 16 Dec; MAP 24 Feb.

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** FTT 1 Dec, 15 Dec; MP 23, 30 Dec; Bayshore 30 Dec; all very late.

**Am. Pipit:** Heckscher SP SUFF 2 Dec; 60 Cutchogue 2 Dec; 12 NYBK 15 Dec; 3 NYSG 16 Dec; 18 JBWE 30 Dec.

#### WARBLERS

**TENNESSEE WARBLER:** PAL 10 Feb (TB, AG, ph), 2nd winter record, 1st in Feb.

**Orange-crowned Warbler:** some widely scattered.

**Nashville Warbler:** PP to 5 Jan; NYQU 15 Dec; VCP 23 Dec; MNSA 4, 8 Jan, 6 Feb; FTR 29 Jan; PAL 10 Feb.

**N. Parula:** CP 1 Jan (TF); CP 16 Dec (RG).

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** our usual wintering warbler.

**Pine Warbler:** CP 1 Dec; NYQU 15 Dec; GRP area 1 Jan; MAP 12 Jan; PAL 10 Feb.

**Palm Warbler:** dozen Brooklyn to Montauk.

**Blackpoll Warbler:** CP 1 Dec (TF); MP 10 Dec (AB).

**Black-and-white Warbler:** APP 9 Dec (AG); very late, seen on 4 prior LI CBCs.

**Am. Redstart:** CP 1 Dec (TF), very late.

**Ovenbird:** FTR 5-30 Dec, 26 Jan; NYSN Tobay 30 Dec.

**N. Waterthrush:** NYMK 15 Dec.

**Com. Yellowthroat:** CP 1 Dec; MP 10 Dec; 2 NYBK 15 Dec; 2 NYMK 15 Dec; 2 NYNN 22 Dec; VCP 23 Dec; 2 NYSN 30 Dec; INP 26 Jan.

**Wilson's Warbler:** PP to 6 Jan; Pleasant Valley SI 29 Dec (HFi *fide* HFI).

**Yellow-breasted Chat:** some widely scattered.

#### TANAGERS – WEAVERS

**Chipping Sparrow:** PP 12 Dec; 4 NYBK 15 Dec; 10-19 near GRP 5 Jan-17 Feb;

Dead Horse Bay KING 5 Jan.

**Vesper Sparrow:** DP 5 Dec.

**Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow:** NYCA 16 Dec; 2 NYSM 27 Dec.

**Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow:** MNSA Jan.

**sharp-tailed sparrow sp:** 3 NYSN 30 Dec.

**Lapland Longspur:** NYQW 15 Dec; NYOR 29 Dec; East Hampton 25 Jan; St Charles Cemetery NASS 5 Feb thru.

**Dickcissel:** JBCH to mid Dec.

**Com. Grackle:** Northville itinerant flock of 3000+ blackbirds, mostly this sp 12-17 Jan.

**Boat-tailed Grackle:** 186 JBWR 15 Dec; SHIN.

**Baltimore Oriole:** FTR 6, 12 Dec; PP 12 Dec; NYMK 15 Dec; CP 16, 22 Dec; NYSN 30 Dec; 2 Garden City feeder 21 Feb; Elmont feeder Feb.

**Red Crossbill:** 12 JBWE 10 Dec; NYCA 16 Dec; 4 Hunter's Garden Eastport 5 Jan.

**White-winged Crossbill:** 22 Fieldston School BRON 12 Dec; NYQW 15 Dec; 4 NYMK 15 Dec; NYCA 16 Dec; 4 NYBW Wave Hill 23 Dec.

**Com. Redpoll:** Accabonac 14 Dec; NYSG 15 Dec; 2 flew in off the water MP 3 Feb; Hither Hills feeder 11, 15 Feb; 6 MP 16 Feb; JBWR 17 Feb.

**Pine Siskin:** 12 Fieldston School BRON 12 Dec; 3 Montauk Village 13 Dec; NYQW 15 Dec; NYCA 16 Dec; 12 NYNN 22 Dec.

**Evening Grosbeak:** Fireplace feeder 14 Dec; NYMK 15 Dec.

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## STANDARD ABBREVIATIONS

Regional rarities appear in BOLD; county names are shortened to their first four letters and appear in UPPER CASE letters; months are shortened to their first three letters. In species accounts: number of individuals omitted implies that one individual was reported; ! - details seen by Regional Editor; ad - adult; Alt - Alternate plumage; Am. - American; arr - arrival or first of season; BBS - Breeding Bird Survey; BOTS - bird of the season; CBC - Christmas Bird Count; CO - confirmed nesting; Com. - Common; E. - Eastern; FL - fledgling; FY -adult feeding young; I - Island; imm - immature; intro - see introduction to report; juv - juvenile; L - Lake; max - maximum; mob - multiple observers; N. - Northern; NYSDEC - New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; NWR - National Wildlife Refuge; NYSARC - report to New York State Avian Records Committee; P -park; Pd- Pond; ph - photographed; Pt -Point; Res - Reservoir;Ri - River; SP - State Park; spm - specimen; subad -subadult; T - Town of; thru - throughout period; Twn - township; W. - Western; WMA - Wildlife Management Area; y - young.

## REPORTING REGIONS

Regional boundaries coincide with county lines, except at:

**Region 1-Region 2** in Orleans, Genesee and Wyoming Counties:

the boundary is NY Route 98 from Pt. Breeze to Batavia;  
NY Route 63 from Batavia to Pavilion, and NY Route 19  
from Pavilion to the Allegany County line.

**Region 2-Region 3** in Ontario County:

the boundary is Mud Creek to NY Route 64, NY Route 64  
from Bristol Center to S. Bristol Springs, and Route 21  
from S. Bristol Springs to the Yates County line.

**Region 3-Region 5** in Cayuga County:

the boundary is NY Route 31.

## REPORTING DEADLINES

**Winter Season:** December, January, February

Deadline is 7 March

**Spring Season:** March, April, May

Deadline is 7 June

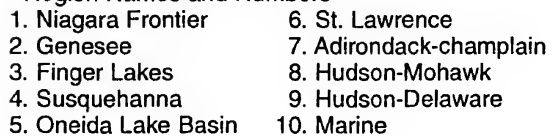
**Summer Season:** June, July, August

Deadline is 7 September

**Fall Season:** September, October, November

Deadline is 7 December





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